

UNDERSTANDING INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA AND ITS EFFECTS ON BLACK  
LEADERS WORKING WITHIN PREDOMINANTLY WHITE ORGANIZATIONS

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To my beloved children.

I dedicate this thesis project to you to symbolize love, dedication, and optimism for your future.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

BLM- Black Lives Matter

CCM- Contemporary Christian Music

COGIC- Church of God in Christ

CRT- Critical Race Theory

DFA- Dilworth First Assembly

D. Min- Doctor of Ministry

FHA- Federal Housing Administration

HBCU- Historic Black College and Universities

KKK- Ku Klux Klan

MAGA- Make America Great Again

NAACP- National Association of the Advancement of Colored People

NCC- New Chicago Church

PTSS- Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome

PTSD- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

PWI- Predominantly White Institution

SBC- Southern Baptist Convention

SCAD- The Savannah College of Art and Design

SLT- Social Learning Theory

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To my children, I honor the people you become daily. This project is to hopefully demonstrate to you all what it means to center yourselves on the moral compass of Jesus. As you center yourself on God's voice, may His grace protect you and cover you as you navigate this world. I do not doubt that God will use you all to change the world for the better.



## GLOSSARY

Accountable Individualism. This means that individuals exist independent of structures and institutions, have free will, and are individually accountable for their actions.<sup>1</sup>

Anti-Racism. Refers to the work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life. Anti-racism tends to be an individualized approach and set up in opposition to individual racist behavior and impacts.<sup>2</sup>

Anti-Racist refers to someone supporting an anti-racist policy through their actions or expressing anti-racist ideas. This policy includes expressing ideas that racial groups are equal and do not need to develop and support policies that reduce racial inequity.<sup>3</sup>

Anti-Racist Ideas. This refers to any idea that racial groups are equal in their apparent differences. There is nothing wrong with any racial group. Anti-racists argue that racist policies are the cause of racial injustices.<sup>4</sup>

Anti-structuralism. Refers to the belief that invoking social structures shifts guilt away from its root source—the accountable individual.<sup>5</sup>

Assimilationist. Refers to one expressing the racist idea that a racial group is culturally or behaviorally inferior and is supporting cultural or behavioral enrichment programs to develop that racial group.<sup>6</sup>

Bigotry. It is an intolerant prejudice that glorifies one's group and denigrates members of other groups.<sup>7</sup>

BIPOC. It refers to Black Indigenous People of Color

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1. <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary#anti-racism>. Project Change's "The Power of Words." Originally produced for Project Change Lessons Learned II, also included in *A Community Builder's Toolkit* – both produced by Project Change and The Center for Assessment and Policy Development with some modification by RacialEquityTools.org.

2. <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary#anti-racism>.

3. Kendi, Ibram X., *How to be an Antiracist*, (New York, NY: Random House, 2019), 14.

4. Kendi, Ibram X., *How to be an Antiracist*, (New York, NY: Random House, 2019), 14-23.

5. Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 76-87.

6. Kendi, Ibram X., *How to be an Antiracist*, (New York, NY: Random House, 2019), 14-23.

7. National Conference for Community and Justice - St. Louis Region. Unpublished handout used in the *Dismantling Racism Institute* program.

Chattel Slavery. It refers to the owning of human beings as property that could be bought, sold, given, and inherited.<sup>8</sup>

Cognitive Dissonance. It can be seen as an antecedent condition that leads to actions that reduce dissonance.<sup>9</sup>

Collective Memory. It is the unconscious state of reliving the trauma through behaviors connected to various groups of people and cultures who share a cultural past and attempt to resolve hidden issues.<sup>10</sup>

Colonization. It is the invasion, dispossession, and subjugation of a people. The invasion need not be military; it can begin— or continue— as a geographical intrusion in the form of agricultural, urban, or industrial encroachments.<sup>11</sup>

Colorism. It refers to a robust collection of racist policies that lead to inequities between Light people and Dark people, supported by racist ideas about Light and Dark people.<sup>12</sup>

Complex Trauma. It is something that occurs repeatedly and escalates throughout its duration.<sup>13</sup>

Critical Race Theory. The Critical Race Theory movement considers many of the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies take up. However, they place them in a broader perspective, including economics, history, and even feelings and the unconscious. Moreover, unlike traditional civil rights, which embraces incrementalism and step-by-step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order. It includes equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and constitutional law principles.<sup>14</sup>

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8. Amy Kasza, "Chattel Slavery: Definition and America." (Study.com, February 20, 2017), [study.com/academy/lesson/chattel-slavery-definition-and-america.html](https://study.com/academy/lesson/chattel-slavery-definition-and-america.html).

9. Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 1957), 9-17.

10. Zofia Hartowicz Sylvia and California Institute of Integral Studies, *Bringing Intergenerational Trauma and Resilience to Consciousness: The Journey of Healing and Transformation for the Wounded Healer Exploring Ancestral Legacy* (California Institute of Integral Studies, Dissertation, 2018).

11. *Colonization and Racism*. Film. Emma LaRocque, PhD. Aboriginal Perspective. Also see *Race and Colonialism*, ed. Robert Ross and Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy Andrea Smith.

12. Kendi, Ibram X., *How to be an Antiracist*, (New York, NY: Random House, 2019), 14-23.

13. C.A. Courtois, *Complex Trauma, Complex Reactions: Assessment and Treatment* (Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training, 2004), 41, 412-425.

14. Delgado, Richard, Stefancic, Jean, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (New York, NY, NYU Press, 2001).

Culture. It refers to a way of life of a group of people— the behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them. They get passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next.

Cultural Appropriation. It refers to the theft of cultural elements for one's use, commodification, or profit — including symbols, art, language, customs, etc. — often without understanding, acknowledgment, or respect for their value in the original culture. This is often found when the dominant (i.e., White) culture takes other cultural elements and uses them for capital gain, profit, and commodification.<sup>15</sup>

Decolonization. It is the active resistance against colonial powers and a shifting of power towards political, economic, educational, cultural, psychic independence and power that originates from a colonized nations' indigenous culture. This process occurs politically and applies to the personal and societal psychic, cultural, political, agricultural, and educational deconstruction of colonial oppression.<sup>16</sup>

Discrimination. It refers to the unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion, and other categories.<sup>17</sup>

Diversity. It includes all the ways that people differ. It encompasses all the characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. It is all-inclusive and recognizes everyone and every group as part of the diversity that should be valued. A broad definition includes not only race, ethnicity, and gender — the groups that most often come to mind when the term “diversity” gets used. In addition, it includes age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance. It also involves different ideas, perspectives, and values.<sup>18</sup>

Empathy. It is the ability to share in the experience of other people, to enter their context with the ability to reflect on the concrete needs for justice there without losing grasp on one's own separate identity.<sup>19</sup>

Environmental Racism. is a collective form of racism that affects poor communities and those of color? As a result, these communities get disproportionately exposed to air, water, and

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15. “Colors of Resistance Archive” (Racial Equity Tools. October 2019, Accessed August 21, 2021). [https://www.udel.edu/content/dam/udelImages/ceoe/documents/about/RET\\_Glossary\\_Updated\\_October\\_2019\\_.pdf](https://www.udel.edu/content/dam/udelImages/ceoe/documents/about/RET_Glossary_Updated_October_2019_.pdf).

16. Eric Ritskes, *The Movement for Black Lives..... What Is Decolonization and Why Does It Matter?*(September 21, 2012), <https://intercontinentalcry.org/what-is-decolonization-and-why-does-it-matter/>.

17. Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative. *A Community Builder's Tool Kit*.

18. UC Berkeley Center for Equity, Inclusion and Diversity, Glossary of Terms.

19. Martin L. Hoffman, *Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for Caring and Justice* (Cambridge, England, Cambridge University Press2000).

chemical pollutants. They also get denied the same high-quality municipal services that White communities receive.<sup>20</sup>

Epigenetics. is the study of how the transmission of information from one generation to the next affects offspring's genes without altering the primary structure of DNA.<sup>21</sup>

Ethnicity. It is a socially defined category of people who identify with each other based on common ancestral, social, cultural, or national experiences.

Ethnic Gnosticism is a term used to explain the phenomenon of people believing that somehow, one can know when something or someone is racist because of one's ethnicity. It manifests most when discussing racism in America.<sup>22</sup>

Historical Racial Trauma. A group rather than an individual shares this. It spans multiple generations who carry trauma-related symptoms without being present for the past traumatizing event.<sup>23</sup>

Implicit Bias. It is also known as unconscious or hidden bias; implicit biases are negative associations that people unknowingly hold. They are expressed automatically, without conscious awareness.<sup>24</sup>

Inattentional Blindness. Inattentional Blindness is the failure to notice something evident because of a lack of attention.<sup>25</sup>

Intergenerational Trauma. It describes a set of circumstances that have happened to an individual and then transmitted from generation to generation.

Internalized Racism. is the process of internalizing external racism by accepting the limitations placed on a person and their community, which leads to conceding defeat and hopelessness.<sup>26</sup>

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20. Sheila Wise Rowe, *Healing Racial Trauma: The Road to Resilience* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 16.

21. Rowe, *Healing Racial Trauma: The Road to Resilience*, 20-24.

22. Rowe, *Healing Racial Trauma: The Road to Resilience*, 20-28.

23. Vincent Mobatt, Azure B. Thompson, Nghi D. Thai, and Jacob Kraemer, *Historical Trauma as Public Narrative: A Conceptual Review of How History Impacts Present-Day Health.*" (Social Science & Medicine 106, April 2014), 128-36.

24. *State of the Science Implicit Bias Review 2013*(Cheryl Staats, Kirwan Institute: The Ohio State University), 2013.

25. Ayesha Perera, *Inattentional Blindness*, (Simply Psychology, May 21, 2021), <https://www.simplypsychology.org/inattentional-blindness.html>.

26. Sheila Wise Rowe. *Healing Racial Trauma: The Road to Resilience* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 17.

Institutional Racism. Institutional racism refers to how institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group. However, their effect is to create advantages for Whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as people of color.<sup>27</sup>

Internalized Racism. is the process of internalizing external racism by accepting the limitations placed on a person and their community, which leads to conceding defeat and hopelessness.

Intersectionality. It refers to exposing [one's] multiple identities to help clarify how a person can simultaneously experience privilege and oppression. For example, a Black woman in America does not experience gender inequalities precisely the same way as a White woman, nor racial oppression identical to that experienced by a Black man. Each race and gender intersection produces a qualitatively different life.<sup>28</sup>

Microaggression. It refers to everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons. It is based solely upon their marginalized group membership.<sup>29</sup> Microaggressions refer to the day-to-day minor events that add up and wear down a person, thus making them vulnerable to poor health. Microaggressions are daily hassles that come in the form of slights or messages communicated verbally or nonverbally. Microaggression may be unconscious to the perpetrator, so when the bias is exposed, it gets denied, or the person of color gets accused of being overly sensitive.<sup>30</sup>

Moral Injury. Emerged from trauma work with servicewomen and men who participated in, witnessed, or failed to prevent acts that transgressed deeply held moral beliefs and expectations.<sup>31</sup>

Multicultural. This refers to involving or including people or ideas from many different countries, races, or religions.

Multi-Cultural Competency. This refers to a process of learning about and becoming allies with people from other cultures, thereby broadening our understanding and ability to

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27. Maggie Potapchuk, et al. *Flipping the Script: White Privilege and Community Building*, (2005).

28. *Intergroup Resources*, (2012). <http://www.intergroupresources.com/intersectionality/>.

29. Derald Wing Sue, *Microaggressions: More than Just Race* (Psychology Today, 2010) <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/microaggressions-in-everyday-life/201011/microaggressions-more-just-race>, 2010.

30. Thema Davis-Bryant, and Carlota Ocampo, *The Trauma of Racism: Implications for Counseling, Research, and Education*. (The Counseling Psychologist 33, no. 4. July 2005), 574.

31. Joseph McDonald, introduction to *Exploring Moral Injury in Sacred Texts*, ed. Joseph McDonald (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2017), 17.

participate in a multicultural process. The key element to becoming more culturally competent is respect for how others live in and organize the world and an openness to learn from them.<sup>32</sup>

Multi-Ethnic. It involves or includes people of several different ethnic groups.

Oppression. This refers to the oppressor group having the power to define reality for themselves and others.<sup>33</sup>

POC. This refers to People of Color.

Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome. This refers to a condition that exists when a population has experienced intergenerational trauma resulting from centuries of slavery and continues to experience oppression and institutionalized racism today.<sup>34</sup>

Prejudice. This refers to a pre-judgment or unjustifiable, and usually negative, attitude of one type of individual or group toward another group and its members. Such negative attitudes get typically based on unsupported generalizations (or stereotypes) that deny the right of individual members of certain groups to be recognized and treated as individuals with individual characteristics.<sup>35</sup>

Privilege. This is usually invisible to those who have it because we are taught not to see it, but it puts them at an advantage over those who do not have it.<sup>36</sup>

Race. This is a made-up social construct and not an actual biological face.<sup>37</sup>

Racialization. This refers to the processes by which their race defines a group of people.<sup>38</sup>

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31. Paul Kivel, *Multicultural Competence*, 2007.

32. <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary#oppression>. Project Change's "The Power of Words." Originally produced for Project Change Lessons Learned II, also included in *A Community Builder's Toolkit* – both produced by Project Change and The Center for Assessment and Policy Development with some modification by RacialEquityTools.org.

33. Joy DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing* (Milwaukie, OR: Uptone Press, 2017).

34. Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative, *A Community Builder's Tool Kit*.

35. Colors of Resistance Archive. (Accessed June 28, 2019).  
<http://www.coloursofresistance.org/definitions/privilege/>.

36. *Race: Power of an Illusion*, 2003.

37. June Ying Yee, "Racialization," (Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society),  
<http://sk.sagepub.com/reference/ethnicity/n455.xml>.

Racial Battle Fatigue. is a term coined by Professor William Smith of the University of Utah. His study showed how the mental and physical stress people of color face from racism is similar to soldiers' experience in battle. He says that the stress of navigating in White spaces is "mentally, emotionally and physically draining" for people of color.<sup>39</sup>

Racial Equity. This refers to the condition that can get achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicts how one fares in a statistical sense. We consider racial equity part of racial justice when we use the term. Thus we also include work to address the root causes of inequities, not just their manifestation. This includes eliminating policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them.<sup>40</sup>

Racial Identity Development Theory. This discusses how people in various racial groups and multiracial identities form their particular self-concept. It also describes some typical phases in remaking that identity based on learning and awareness of systems of privilege and structural racism, cultural and historical meanings attached to racial categories, and factors operating on the more significant socio-historical level (e.g., globalization, technology, immigration, and increasing multiracial population).<sup>41</sup>

Racial Inequity. This refers to two or more racial groups not standing on approximately equal footing, such as the percentages of each ethnic group in terms of dropout rates, single-family homeownership, access to healthcare, etc.<sup>42</sup>

Racial Gaslighting. When people of color experience racism and microaggressions and often happens when there is no corroboration.<sup>43</sup>

Racial Justice. This refers to the systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone. Racial justice—or racial equity—goes beyond "anti-racism." It is not just the absence of discrimination and inequities but also the presence of deliberate systems. It supports achieving and sustaining racial equity through proactive and preventative measures.<sup>44</sup>

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38. David Love, "'Racial Battle Fatigue' is Real: Victims of Racial Microaggressions Are Stressed Like Soldiers in War," (Atlantic Black Star, November 11, 2016), <https://atlantaBlackstar.com/2016/11/11/racial-battle-fatigue-is-real-victims-of-racial-microaggressions-are-stressed-like-soldiers-in-war/>.

39. Center for Assessment and Policy Development. (Accessed February 27, 2022). <http://www.capd.org/>.

40. Charmaine L. Wijeyesinghe, and Bailey W. Jackson, *New Perspective on Racial Identity Development: Integrating Emerging Frameworks* (NYU Press), 2012.

41. Ibram X. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, (New York, NY: Random House. 2019), 14-25.

<sup>43</sup> Sheila Wise Rowe. *Healing Racial Trauma: The Road to Resilience* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 21.

Racial Reconciliation. This refers to an ongoing spiritual process involving forgiveness, repentance, and justice that restores broken relationships and systems to reflect God’s original intention for all creation to flourish.<sup>45</sup>

Racial Trauma. The physical and psychological symptoms that people of color often experience after a stressful racist incident.<sup>46</sup>

Racialization. This refers to the very complex and contradictory process through which groups get designated as being of a particular “race” and subjected to differential and or unequal treatment. Simply put, “racialization [is] the process of manufacturing and utilizing the notion of race in any capacity” (Dalal, 2002, p. 27). While White people also get racialized, this process is often rendered invisible or normative to those designated as White. As a result, White people may not see themselves as part of a race but still maintain the authority to name and racialize “others.”<sup>47</sup>

Racism. This involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through society’s institutional policies and practices and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices.

Racist. This refers to one supporting a racist policy through their actions or interaction or expressing a racist idea.<sup>48</sup>

Racist Idea. This idea suggests that one racial group is inferior or superior to another.<sup>49</sup>

Racist Policies. This is any measure that produces or sustains racial inequity between or among racial groups. These policies are written and unwritten laws, rules, procedures, processes, regulations, and guidelines that govern people. There is no such thing as a nonracist or race-neutral policy. Every policy in institutions in every community in every nation is producing or sustaining either racial inequity or equity between racial groups. Racist policies also get expressed through other terms such as “structural racism” or “systemic racism.” Racism itself is institutional, structural, and systemic.<sup>50</sup>

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42. Catalytic Change: Lessons Learned from the Racial Justice Grantmaking Assessment Report, Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity and Applied Research Center, 2009.

43. Brenda Salter McNeal, *Roadmap to Reconciliation: Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness and Justice* (InterVarsity Press, Westmont, IL, June 16, 2020), 196.

44. Sheila Wise Rowe. *Healing Racial Trauma: The Road to Resilience* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 18-19.

45. Calgary Anti-Racism Resources. (Accessed February 27, 2022). <https://www.aclrc.com/racialization>.

46. Ibram X. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, (New York, NY: Random House. 2019), 14-25.

47. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 14-25.



Reconciliation. This is an ongoing spiritual process involving forgiveness, repentance, and justice that restores broken relationships and systems to reflect God’s original intention for all creation to flourish.<sup>51</sup>

Relationalism. It places a strong emphasis on interpersonal relationships.<sup>52</sup>

Social Cognitive Theory. This theory concludes that people are agents in their environments, acting intentionally to achieve desired outcomes and not simply reacting to environmental stimuli.<sup>53</sup>

Spatial Racism. is dominance communicated through spaces and structures that get purposefully designed to divide or change the demographics of communities.<sup>54</sup>

Stereotype Threat. It occurs when people of color unconsciously fear living up to a negative stereotype about their group. Instead of trying to prevent this, people self-sabotage, disengage or alter their aspirations, which ironically causes them to live up to the feared stereotype.<sup>55</sup>

Structural Racism. This encompasses the entire system of White domination, diffused and infused in all aspects of society, including its history, culture, politics, economics, and entire social fabric. Structural racism is more difficult to locate in a particular institution because it involves the reinforcing effects of multiple institutions and cultural norms, past and present. It is continually reproducing old and producing new forms of racism. Structural racism is the most profound and pervasive form of racism – all other forms of racism emerge from structural racism.<sup>56</sup>

Trauma. This is a direct personal experience of an event involving actual or threatened death, serious injury, or other threat to one’s physical integrity. It also involves witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person.<sup>57</sup> Trauma

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48. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 14-25.

49. Brenda Salter McNeal, *Roadmap to Reconciliation: Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness and Justice*, InterVarsity Press, Westmont, IL, p. 196, Kindle Edition, June 16, 2020.

50. Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 76-77.

51. Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory*, (Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ, 1976).

52. Sheila Wise Rowe, *Healing Racial Trauma: The Road to Resilience* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 16.

53. Rowe, *Healing Racial Trauma: The Road to Resilience*, 45.

54. *Structural Racism for the Race and Public Policy Conference*, Keith Lawrence, Aspen Institute on Community Change and Terry Keleher, Applied Research Center.

manifests itself when an individual is triggered, consciously or unconsciously, which stems from a traumatic event that previously occurred in their life.

White Fragility. This is “a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable [for White people], triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate White racial equilibrium.”<sup>58</sup>

Whiteness. This refers to the specific dimensions of racism that serve to elevate White people over people of color. This definition counters the dominant representation of racism in mainstream education as isolated in discrete behaviors that some individuals may or may not demonstrate. It goes beyond naming specific privileges.<sup>59</sup>

White Privilege. This refers to the unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits, and choices bestowed on people solely because they are White. Generally, White people who experience such privilege do so without being conscious of it.<sup>60</sup>

White Solidarity. It requires silence about anything that exposes the advantage of the White position and tacit agreement to remain racially united in protecting White supremacy.”<sup>61</sup>

White Supremacy. This refers to the idea (ideology) that White people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of White people are superior to People of Color and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions. While most people associate White supremacy with extremist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the neo-Nazis, White supremacy is ever-present in our institutional and cultural assumptions that assign value, morality, goodness, and humanity to the White group while casting people and communities of color as worthless (worthless), immoral, bad, and inhuman and “undeserving.” Drawing from critical race theory, the term “White supremacy” also refers to a political or socio-economic system where White people enjoy structural advantages and rights that other racial and ethnic groups do not, both at a collective and an individual level.

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55. Gilbert Reyes, *The Encyclopedia of Psychological Trauma*, (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, October 13, 2008), 485.

56. Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Race*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press), 2018.

57. Peggy McIntosh, *White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women Studies*, (The National Seed Project, 1989), <https://nationalseedproject.org/Key-SEED-Texts/White-privilege-unpacking-the-invisible-knapsack>.

58. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Race*, 10-12.

59. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Race*, 58.

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis project explores if leaders understand the impact of intergenerational trauma and its effects on Black leaders working within predominantly White organizations. This project will examine the biblical and theological frameworks of intergenerational trauma. Third, this thesis project will explore historical narratives, psychological, and psychological implications due to intergenerational trauma. Thirteen leaders participated in interviews demonstrating signs of intergenerational trauma that manifested for White leaders through cognitive bias, confirmation bias, and cognitive dissonance. For Black leaders, intergenerational trauma manifested through Transgenerational Trauma and signs of Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome through signs of vacant esteem, ever-present anger, or racist socialization.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. I have taken an oath and confirmed that I would follow your righteous laws. I have suffered much; preserve my life, Lord, according to your word. Accept, Lord, the willing praise of my mouth, and teach me your laws.

-Psalm 119:105

Some benefits come with being racially and ethnically diverse within organizations.

People can learn about different cultures, develop racially different relationships, and experience the world differently. However, ethnographic research demonstrates the cost associated with attending multiracial organizations.<sup>1</sup> Racially diverse individuals often feel isolated. They may not meet their religious-cultural preferences or be relegated to positions that matter symbolically but have little to no real influence.<sup>2</sup> This thesis project seeks to understand the impact of intergenerational trauma and its effects on Black leaders working within predominantly White organizations. The result of intergenerational trauma from slavery on mental health often gets overlooked in America. I believe this is primarily due to American culture never processing the impact of chattel slavery on Black and White people groups. There seemed to be very little research concerning intergenerational trauma and how it impacts Black leaders working within majority White organizations. However, I believe this thesis project will produce meaningful conversations for leaders in mainly White organizations. This is because intergenerational trauma has impacted everyone despite race and ethnicity. This project will demonstrate

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1. Jessica M. Barron, *"Managed Diversity: Race, Place and an Urban Church,"* (Sociology of Religion 77, 2016), 18-36.

2. Korie L. Edwards and Rebecca Kim, *"Estranged Pioneers: The Case of African American and Asian American Multiracial Church Pastors,"* (Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review, 2019, XX: XX), 1-22.

intergenerational trauma by examining various theological, historical, social, and cultural differences between White and Black leaders. In addition, this project will examine how intergenerational trauma manifests within leaders when addressing issues of race and ethnicity.

For leaders seeking to understand cultural differences, build a multi-ethnic organization, or currently operating multi-ethnic organizations, this project serves as a resource for understanding American history, the role of Evangelicalism, and how Black leaders may experience trauma. With the rise of ethnic and cultural diversity in America, leaders must understand how diversity directly impacts their organizations and the role of intergenerational trauma. According to David Livermore, multicultural organizations are more likely to influence and impact the world. Organizations need to evolve beyond a homogeneous context.<sup>3</sup> It is undeniable that American Church and culture are rapidly changing. However, if organizations do not evolve, it will lead to stagnation, marginalization, irrelevance, and decline.<sup>4</sup> From a Christian perspective, Michael Emerson believes anything less than a religious movement for multiracial congregations will lead to the decline of the American Church as we know it.<sup>5</sup> Racial unity within the Church is at the very core of the mission of God. God's mission is that we would be one, just as Christ is one with the Father.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, when the Church is one, the Church can model God's redemptive narrative embedded throughout Scripture and modeled by Christ.

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3. David Livermore, *Driven by Difference: How Great Companies Fuel Innovation Through Diversity* (New York, NY: AMACOM, 2016), 26-42.

4. Mark DeYmaz, *Disruption: Repurposing the Church to Redeem the Community* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2017), 6.

5. Michael Emerson, *"The Future of Race: A New Day for Congregations"* (New Haven, CT: Yale Press, 2013), <https://reflections.yale.edu/article/future-race/new-day-multiracial-congregations>.

6. John 17:20-23.

However, does the American Church value the unity and oneness that Christ implores Christians to pursue?

This project seeks to demystify the collective ambivalence that keeps Christians from fulfilling God's mission by examining the role of intergenerational trauma embedded theologically, politically, economically, and socially. Despite these factors, the potency of the Gospel points us back to whom God created us to be— one in Christ. Christians are called to abide in Christ and seek oneness with one another, allowing individuals to rise above the trauma they may endure here on earth. In 2 Timothy 3:12, Paul reminds us that everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will get persecuted.<sup>7</sup> Due to the fallen nature of this world, intergenerational trauma impacts every human being; however, through Christ, there is great hope found in overcoming all things. Although we may be predisposed to intergenerational trauma, human depravity, and the legacy of slavery, Christians are not called to settle for human depravity and the generational sins of their ancestors as a justification for not pursuing unity and oneness. Instead, they are called to love one another and to become one.<sup>8</sup> We see God imploring His people to denounce generational curses through radical repentance and obedience to His word. Racial unity and healing are essential for the Church to thrive and influence the world. This necessary disruption of our beliefs and ideology keeps us from valuing people created in God's image.

From the 1500s until 1870, chattel slavery was legal in the United States. During this time, the enslaved were beaten, stripped of their freedoms, taken away from their families, sold to different plantations, overworked, experimented on for medical research, and used as

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7. 2 Tim 3:12.

8. John 17:20-23.

entertainment. It was evident that the first generation of enslaved people established trauma, and this trauma continues to impact America holistically. First, consider the trauma first-generation enslaved people endured and how biases and various forms of traumas are transmitted from generation to generation. Second, what are the implications of the enslaved released with no services for mental health, and how has it directly traumatized Black people today?<sup>9</sup> Third, consider the exact impact of slavery on White people. When did White people wrestle with the egregious psychological impact of watching enslaved people beaten to death? When did they overcome their beliefs about Black people, and how does that shape individual perspectives currently? Finally, it is essential to consider how slavery impacted the American people from generation to generation. Despite slavery being a grotesque institution, leaders can seek solidarity and healing by understanding how intergenerational trauma impacts relationships within predominantly White organizations. Considering intergenerational trauma as the umbrella for this project, this project will examine the behaviors influenced by intergenerational trauma and the impact on leaders within predominantly White organizations.

Although slavery ended in 1865, it was followed by decades of Jim Crow and segregation, leading to the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s. There were never mental health resources or treatments offered for the trauma endured by Black Americans for hundreds of years, contributing to behaviors, triggers, and practices that still impact Black leaders today. The enslaved family existed only to serve the enslaver, to endure physically, psychologically, and socially. The enslaved family had to develop a system that made survival possible under such degrading conditions.<sup>10</sup> Many Black leaders working within predominantly

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9. Joy DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing* (Milwaukee, WI: Uptone Press, 2017), 101.

10. DeGruy, 34.

White organizations that lack cultural intelligence may experience exploitation and abuse through microaggressions, implicit biases, and policies embedded in the organization's structure. Suppose leaders are unaware of intergenerational trauma and how it impacts working relationships. Intergenerational trauma may manifest through conflict, miscommunication, and manifested trauma. Therefore, understanding transgenerational trauma, and signs of PTSS, becomes a way of empathizing and understanding what Black leaders may experience while working in predominantly White organizations. Moreover, this project becomes another helpful tool when attempting to understand racism, racial injustice, and how to approach intercultural relationships responsibly.

According to many scholars, race in the United States is socially constructed. The historical implications of slavery and race impact racialization within Evangelicalism and White organizations.<sup>11</sup> Racialization within Evangelicalism is due to intergenerational trauma that manifests sub-consciously within their organizations and leaders. In addition, this is due to the legacy of racism and the social construct of race. Racism involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through society's institutional policies and practices and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and procedures. Therefore, if White leaders and organizations desire to diversify their organization, intergenerational trauma creates an opportunity for White leaders to understand better the implications of racialization within their organizations and how it may impact Black leaders. Moreover, it is helpful to consider their motives and expectations for Black leaders they desire to integrate into their organizations.

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11. Michael Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith. Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2001), 16.



This project will explore the implications of assimilationist ideologies, principles, and standards created by Evangelicalism for Black leaders. Black leaders have diverse and unique experiences. Therefore, it is worth Black leaders to consider conscious and unconscious expectations. White leaders have when hiring or engaging with Christian Black leaders. Assimilation naturally takes place for individuals entering a new work environment or community. However, when considering the impact of Black leaders' experience, and the role of assimilation, I recommend that White leaders engage with intergenerational trauma and create space for Black leaders to join their staff without forcing them to assimilate and leave their culture outside the mainly White organization. The impact of assimilation is evident in understanding intergenerational trauma and race in America.

National data has revealed that 78% of Black practicing Christians believe there is a race issue compared to 38% of practicing White Christians.<sup>12</sup> In 2006, the Barna Group surveyed Millennials who believe Christianity is exclusive, judgmental, hypocritical, and lacks cultural relevance and innovation because it seeks to be more American rather than like Jesus.<sup>13</sup> This data speaks to Millennials leaving Christianity while highlighting tensions surrounding ethnic and cultural inclusion. We will examine how intergenerational trauma impacts Black and White culture's integration by reviewing efforts by various leaders and organizations. This project will explore racial tensions between White and Black people based on a historical analysis in chapter three and interviews conducted in chapters six and seven. Scripture embraces the idea of the

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12. *Black Practicing Christians Are Twice as Likely as Their White Peers to See a Race Problem*, Articles in Culture & Media in Faith & Christianity (Ventura, CA: Barna Group, 2020), <https://www.barna.com/research/problems-solutions-racism/>.

13. Carolyn Custis James, *"The Millennial Exodus"* (New York, NY: HuffPost, 2017), [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/the-millennial-exodus\\_b\\_59ca5cd8e4b08d66155045d0](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/the-millennial-exodus_b_59ca5cd8e4b08d66155045d0).

world being multi-ethnic, and there are benefits to being a multi-ethnic organization. Diversity ensures organizations can impact more people and have better cultural and financial gains, which could be an antidote for Millennials leaving the Evangelical Church. If organizations desire authentic diversity, understanding intergenerational trauma ensures that organizations and leaders healthily foster diversity without minimizing or traumatizing Black leaders in the process. When leaders understand intergenerational trauma, it creates an opportunity to develop their cultural intelligence. Cultural intelligence is connected to leaders understanding what it means to be redemptive leaders, which we will explore in later chapters.

Intergenerational trauma describes a set of circumstances that happen to individuals and transmit from generation to generation. According to the American Psychiatric Association, trauma is defined as “direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death, serious injury, other threat to one’s physical integrity, or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person.”<sup>14</sup> Common trauma examples include sexual abuse, child neglect, physical and mental abuse, racial and cultural biases, segregation, and discrimination. Intergenerational trauma impacts the way individuals within a family understand, cope with, and heal from trauma and how these family members process events or experiences psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually. Common reactions to intergenerational trauma are anger, rage, depression, shame, guilt, and denigration of one’s identity, which impacts relationships and behavior. For example, consider chattel slavery—the owning of human beings as property that could be bought, sold, given, and inherited.<sup>15</sup> Suppose

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14. Gilbert Reyes, *The Encyclopedia of Psychological Trauma* (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 485.

15. Amy Kasza, “Chattel Slavery: Definition and America” (Study.com, 2017), [www.study.com/academy/lesson/chattel-slavery-definition-and-america.html](http://www.study.com/academy/lesson/chattel-slavery-definition-and-america.html).

Black people have not had adequate resources for navigating intergenerational trauma. How might years of trauma, where millions of Black people endured oppression and abuse for hundreds of years with no therapy, impact the behaviors of Black people today? Furthermore, how does this impact the White evangelicals? How do centuries of trauma impact White leaders who did not endure oppression but, through their ancestors, witnessed the realities of slavery?

As Christ-followers, we rob ourselves of our humanity when we refuse to acknowledge the implications and impact of chattel slavery, American history, intergenerational trauma, and its dismal effects on society. White leaders are responsible for the general fiduciary duty of ensuring Black leaders feel represented within their organization's culture and that their influence is recognized and respected by fellow employees and congregants. This project acknowledges that Black leaders work within predominantly White organizations because they are qualified, willing, and able to help organizations fulfill their mission. However, there is a desperate need for authentic convergence within predominantly White organizations. Research suggests that more than two-thirds of Black HR professionals in the U.S. believe their organizations are not providing enough opportunities for Black employees, but their White colleagues are not convinced.<sup>16</sup> According to Howard J. Ross, many White employees are not aware of the challenges. They do not realize the experience of Black professionals and how it differs from their own experiences.

Moreover, the Coqual report suggests that despite stable income, benefits, and opportunities to travel, many Black professionals are not getting a sense of belonging, trust, and respect.<sup>17</sup> This project intends not to demonize, dismiss, or denigrate leaders and organizations.

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16. Lisa Rabasca Roepe, *Barriers for Black Professionals*, SHRM, February 6, 2021, (accessed March 22, 2022), <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/all-things-work/pages/racism-corporate-america.aspx>.

Rather, it is designed to bring perspective from a Black man who has worked within predominantly White organizations for almost two decades. For Black leaders to work sustainably within predominantly White organizations, there must be a sense of commitment to understanding how intergenerational trauma and its effects on Black leaders, impactful working relationships between Black and White leaders. In addition, leaders must understand the vision and belief that God is working within the hearts of all believers who are seeking His Kingdom and righteousness.

When considering the multi-ethnic movement and racial tensions in America, White leaders leading predominantly White organizations can experience the pressure of becoming more diverse and navigating racial tensions. To resolve their dissonance, I believe they hire a Black leader to work for the organization without considering the impact of intergenerational trauma. Cognitive dissonance helps us understand how intergenerational trauma impacts White leaders when working with Black leaders and pursuing racial reconciliation. Cognitive dissonance becomes a pattern that many White leaders display when they are not operating with cultural intelligence or are unaware of how intergenerational trauma impacts Black people. This harms Black leaders working within predominantly White organizations. Therefore, understanding Transgenerational Trauma, and signs of Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS), creates a way for White leaders to understand the importance of what was transmitted through intergenerational trauma and how it impacts Black leaders working within their organizations. I suggest that cognitive bias and confirmation bias contribute to cognitive dissonance for White leaders.

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17. *"Being Black in Corporate America: An Intersectional Exploration,"* Coqual, Center for Talent Innovation, June 2019, (accessed March 22, 2022), <https://www.talentinnovation.org/private/assets/BeingBlack-KeyFindings-CTL.pdf>.

This project creates an opportunity for leaders to approach racial reconciliation differently within their organization. The focus is to understand further intergenerational trauma and its effects on Black leaders in predominantly White organizations and how leaders can better empathize and work together. When people release fixed expectations of racial and ethnic behavior, it creates an opportunity for a more open investigation of how social factors produce new and interesting combinations of social identities. It allows the creation and reshaping of social structures.<sup>18</sup> Paul reminds us in Ephesians 2:14-16 that, “He himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.”<sup>19</sup> This message to the Ephesians is essential for Christian leaders building multi-ethnic organizations.

Paul points to Jews and Gentiles reconciling through the work of Christ and how the message of reconciliation reveals Christ’s mystery to His people. In addition, John stated in Revelation, “After this, I looked. There before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing White robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb’” (Rev 7:9-10). There will not be a dividing of walls in Heaven. Christ calls the Church to embody the ministry of reconciliation and redemption. The hope for reconciliation and redemption is

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18. Gerardo Marti, “*Fluid Ethnicity and Ethnic Transcendence in Multiracial Churches*” (Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 2008), [https://www.academia.edu/1097451/Fluid\\_Ethnicity\\_and\\_Ethnic\\_Transcendence\\_in\\_Multiracial\\_Churches](https://www.academia.edu/1097451/Fluid_Ethnicity_and_Ethnic_Transcendence_in_Multiracial_Churches). Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion. 47 1 11-16. 2008?email\_work\_card=view-paper.

19. Ephesians 2:14-16.

essential to the mission of God, but how has intergenerational trauma impacted the effort of racial reconciliation? We will explore this question in Chapter three and why racial reconciliation efforts continue to be challenging for the American Church.

There are various perspectives on racial reconciliation, and there has been success on the micro-level. However, I believe if we evaluate the failed attempts at racial reconciliation, it creates an opportunity for us to see that it stems from intergenerational trauma transmitted in our families, religion, institutions, and communities. Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard says that life can only be understood backward, but it must be lived forwards.<sup>20</sup> White leaders must go through the process of unlearning and relearning history if they desire to pursue racial reconciliation, cultural intelligence, and authentic diversity in their organizations. New studies reveal that diversity training has been a largely ineffective way of addressing racism within the workspace. White leaders cannot expect true diversity just by hiring Black leaders.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, this project will provide a biblical foundation for understanding the impact of intergenerational trauma.

Chapter two will establish a biblical and theological framework rooted in two primary questions: 1) How do we understand intergenerational trauma in the Bible. 2) What is God doing in the world? First, this chapter will examine the Genesis story of Abraham and conclude with the Exodus narrative. We will examine the importance and role of Black ecclesiology, its core values, and its impact on America. White leaders need to understand that the Black Christian

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20. Tom McCallum, *Life Can Only Be Understood Backwards, but It Must Be Lived Forwards* (Medium, 2019), <https://medium.com/@tommccallum/life-can-only-be-understood-backwards-but-it-must-be-lived-forwards-7217747f5e09>.

21. Cedrick-Michael Simmons, *"I'm Black and Afraid of 'White Fragility'"* (The Bellows, 2020), <https://www.thebellows.org/im-Black-and-afraid-of-White-fragility/>.

tradition is not and has never been a monolith. However, it is fair to assume commonalities theologically and socially that reflect beliefs all Christians have generally believed.<sup>22</sup> White leaders should consider how they can leverage the experiences of Black leaders who have worked across racial lines within their organization. This creates an opportunity for Black leaders to determine if the majority of White organization is psychologically safe before joining their staff.

Lastly, we will examine these three fundamental themes within Christianity: 1) The Kingdom of God, 2) The Image of God, and 3) The Role of the Church. Kingdom theology will inform our understanding of the inclusion of Black leaders within predominantly White organizations. The image of God will unpack historical precepts concerning image and likeness and what has fundamentally shaped how individuals view each other. In addition, we will examine the role of the Church and its responsibility and calling on earth. Moreover, we will explore the ambiguous concept “already but not yet,” and the doctrines of humanity and the fall to explicitly answer this question. The “already but not yet” is rooted in Christ bringing the future into the presence of His people. In addition, this chapter will address the Church’s role in the world by examining historical beliefs concerning the role of the Church. The tensions between the present kingdom reality and the future kingdom reality will allow us to explore Christian thought leaders and perspectives surrounding humanity and the fall. Christian categories help us understand what God created and the response of creation to God’s commands.

Chapter three will evaluate various literature surrounding racial reconciliation and why this is still a relevant discussion today. We will examine evangelical attempts at racial

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22. Esau McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation As An Exercise in Hope* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 5.

reconciliation and the role of intergenerational trauma. It is undeniable that theology, politics, social issues, and segregation have influenced and impacted racial reconciliation within Evangelicalism. Historically, Black and White leaders have attempted to pursue racial reconciliation and unity, but what has materialized from these efforts, and how does it address current racial tensions? Chapter three will examine various leaders, their writings, and racial reconciliation attempts over the last three decades. In the 1990s, efforts for White and Black leaders to unify and pursue racial reconciliation were led by Bill McCartney's movement, Promise Keepers. This chapter will consider the attempts by charismatic and Pentecostal leaders from the television network TBN. In the 2000s, social justice movements like Black Lives Matter formed, forcing America and particularly White organizations to address racial injustice in America. From 2016 to 2020, Politics, Covid-19, and racial inequities disrupted American culture, forcing many predominantly White organizations to confront the sin of racism and how it impacts the American Church. Racial reconciliation attempts will be examined and provide insights into the role of intergenerational trauma. This chapter will help leaders understand that it is plausible that this is due to intergenerational trauma when tensions arise between leaders. This chapter allows leaders to ruminate and evaluate their organizations and what they might learn from evangelical attempts and the literature reviews.

Chapter four will examine psychological and counseling literature considering intergenerational trauma. For this project, I suggest that intergenerational trauma manifests for leaders through Transgenerational Trauma, signs of PTSS, Cognitive Bias, and Cognitive Dissonance. When intergenerational trauma triggers White leaders, I suggest it manifests through cognitive bias or cognitive dissonance behaviors. When intergenerational trauma triggers Black leaders, I suggest it manifests through transgenerational trauma and signs of PTSS. We will



explore various experiences and symptoms of these behaviors in chapter four. However, I believe these behaviors manifest because leaders do not understand the impact and implications of trauma transmitted from generation to generation. Moreover, researchers and scholars are trying to understand why tensions persist between Black and White leaders, and we will examine this in chapter four.

Chapter five will demonstrate the methodology used for this project. There were four interviewers and thirteen participants for this project. Chapter six will examine interviews of six White leaders who have worked for predominantly White organizations and their thoughts, beliefs, and responses to various topics. The questions for White leaders are based on their upbringing, organization, social issues, and personal recommendations. The goal is to understand if intergenerational trauma has impacted them by demonstrating signs of cognitive bias, confirmation bias, and cognitive dissonance. Finally, chapter seven will examine interviews of Black leaders who have worked for predominantly White organizations. The interviews for Black leaders will focus on personal stories, upbringing, work experiences within White organizations, social issues, and their future engagement with majority-White organizations. Again, the goal is to understand if leaders exhibit signs of intergenerational trauma by demonstrating transgenerational trauma and signs of PTSS. Chapter eight will conclude and summarize the data collected from the interviews and provide helpful tools to ensure White evangelical leaders are well-equipped to work with Black leaders. Also, this chapter will examine the results of chapters six and seven by demonstrating the impact of intergenerational trauma. Intergenerational trauma serves as an opportunity for understanding the history of trauma and how leaders can work together for genuine diversity.

Contemporary psychologist Joy DeGruy believes the legacy of trauma is reflected in many of our behaviors and beliefs; behaviors and beliefs that at one time were necessary to adapt to survive, yet today serve to undermine our ability to be successful.”<sup>23</sup> In addition, Clinton Robert believes that influential leaders who are productive over a lifetime have a dynamic ministry philosophy that evolves continually from the interplay of three significant factors: biblical dynamics, personal gifts, and situational dynamics.<sup>24</sup> More importantly, leaders must lean into what God has cultivated for them as ambassadors of the Kingdom, for His glory, within their organizations and communities. This project will help leaders acknowledge the severe impact of intergenerational trauma, how trauma manifests, and how intergenerational trauma impacts their organizations and individuals. The preventative and antidotal answer to intergenerational trauma is seeking God’s Kingdom and reflecting Christ to the world. Leaders who understand the impact of intergenerational trauma create an opportunity for healing and harmony when working together. Intergenerational trauma impacts us all and partly reflects human depravity and why topics of race and ethnicity are difficult for leaders. However, Christians are not called to accept the world’s fallen nature, generational sins, and trauma transmitted from generation to generation. Instead, the answer is to embody the redemptive spirit of Christ and His Kingdom. If leaders pursue redemptive leadership, it can reduce the probability of disunity, calamity, and indignant leaders repudiating Evangelicalism altogether. The work of reconciliation has redeemed Christians, and leaders can create environments where all leaders can thrive.

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23. DeGruy, 121.

24. Clinton Robert, *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development* (Colorado Springs, CO: Tyndale House Publishers, 2012), 270.

Black leaders must grapple with generational trauma and how it continues to manifest in ways that are considered acceptable by its broader culture. Consider how trauma manifests through anger and violence— this stems from unhealed trauma that dates back to the Civil War and fighting for individual freedoms. White leaders must grapple with the history of silence and complicity when addressing the impact of slavery and race in America. The historian of American Evangelicalism Mark Noll suggests the inability of 19<sup>th</sup>-century American evangelicals to address issues related to race and slavery led to a profound theological crisis with deep and powerful implications for the United States and American Christianity:

The inability to find a univocal answer in Scripture to the pressing question of slavery troubled Americans for more than thirty years—from, that is, at least in the early 1830s when the rise of a more radical abolitionism precipitated a responding defense of slavery as a positive good, to the end of the [Civil] war in 1865 when the success of Union Arms rendered further exegetical debate pointless.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, Noll argues that Northern and Southern Christians accepted the potency and authority of the Bible and believed society needed to be structured. However, they could not agree on what the Bible taught regarding race and slavery. These beliefs and practices continue to impact Evangelicalism and White organizations, and I believe that White leaders must reckon with a hermeneutical tradition that understood the Bible in light of distinctive American understandings of government, politics, and culture following the American revolution. Black and White leaders all engage with the government, politics, and theology similarly, but vastly different in certain areas. I believe this stems from unhealed intergenerational trauma, and it has manifested greatly over the last few years in America.

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25. Mark Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 6.

Since the murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, racial tensions have been heightened, and White leaders have aggressively made efforts to diversify their organizations. *Time Magazine* released an article about why the killing of George Floyd sparked an American uprising and how protests triggered civic unrest on a scale not seen since the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968.<sup>26</sup> In addition to the death of George Floyd, on January 6, 2021, our nation witnessed protests that left the nation's capital in shambles, and Christians conflicted about what many consider an insurrection and rebellion against the 2020 elections. White leaders hoping to build diverse teams and organizations should be aware of intergenerational trauma and how it impacts Black leaders if they desire to be multi-ethnic or have authentic cross-cultural relationships. If White leaders desire to capitalize on resources and the intellectual property of Black people, each member of the diverse group must be of equal status and consider the implications of intergenerational trauma.<sup>27</sup>

I believe the future is bright. This project serves as a demonstration of how Christian leaders can better understand themselves and intergenerational trauma. During this research, I had the privilege to sit down and interview Naomi Tutu, daughter of Bishop Desmond Tutu. I was curious to know the impact and implications of Apartheid and how it radically changed South Africa in the 90s. This thesis project is inspired by Desmond Tutu's philosophy, Ubuntu Theology— "We believe that a person is a person through another person, that my humanity is caught up, bound up, inextricably, with yours."<sup>28</sup> Humanity is best when it believes in the

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26. Alex Altman, *Why The Killing of George Floyd Sparked an American Uprising*, (Time Magazine, U.S. Protest, June 4, 2020, accessed March 22, 2022), <https://time.com/5847967/george-floyd-protests-trump/>.

27. Christena Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 39.

28. Nouha, *Ubuntu* (Indianapolis, IN: Desmond Tutu Center for Peace, Reconciliation, and Global Justice, 2016), <https://www.desmondututucenter.org/2016/09/15/ubuntu/>.

betterment of the whole rather than focusing on individual happiness and satisfaction. Christians are called to reveal hope to a dark and fallen world by radiating the light of God's kingdom on earth. May His wisdom, grace, and love fill every leader seeking to reflect the kingdom of God in their organizations and within their communities. May leaders seek first His kingdom and righteousness to ensure that all God wants for their lives and organizations are achieved and accomplished.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Biblical and Theological Framework**

Understanding intergenerational trauma and its effects on Black leaders begins with having a solid theological framework of trauma in the Bible. This chapter will examine trauma in the Exodus story transmitted from generation to generation. Considering the trauma of the Israelites in relation to God will help leaders understand why the legacy of slavery continues to impact how we understand these three theological topics: The Kingdom of God, The Image of God, and the Church. Also, this chapter will address how transgenerational trauma impacts and informs Black ecclesiology, culture, and understanding of topics surrounding Biblical justice, racial Reconciliation, discipleship, and race. This chapter will help leaders theologically understand the implications of intergenerational trauma and how it has historically impacted oppressed and enslaved ethnic groups. Finally, we will explore intergenerational trauma within the Israelites and how it affected their community, faith, and mission. Our understanding of trauma in the Bible will guide us to understand God's purpose in the world.

### **The Hebrew (Israelites) People**

Before diving into the Exodus narrative, it is helpful to know what form of trauma existed before God used Moses to set the Hebrew (Israelites) people free in Egypt. In Genesis alone, we discover patterns of lying, deceit, sexual exploitation, and generations impacted by sins from Abraham, father of the Israelites nation. The Genesis narrative provides an overview of behaviors transmitted from generation to generation. In Genesis 12, God promised Abraham and said, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will

curse, and in you, shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”<sup>1</sup> There are several blessings Abraham passed down to generations, and there were signs of intergenerational trauma passed down from Abraham. God promised Abraham a son, but his wife Sara could not have children, Abraham slept with Hagar, and they had a son.<sup>2</sup> Eventually, Sarah gave birth to Isaac, a sign of God’s promises to Abraham. Abraham lied about Sarah being his sister to King Abimelech, but God came to Abimelech in a dream and informed him that he would die because Sarah was married.<sup>3</sup>

In Genesis 26:7-11, immediately after God’s promises to Abraham were reaffirmed, Isaac lied about his wife being his sister to King Abimelech and was confronted about his lie. God’s covenantal promise to Abraham was reiterated to Isaac in Genesis 26, but there was a disruption between Jacob and Esau. Jacob was jealous of Esau and deceived his father, and when Esau became aware of Jacob’s deceit, Jacob fled and lost touch with his family for twenty years. During Jacob’s exile, he worked for Laban and desired to marry Rachel, but ended up marrying Leah. It was not customary for the first younger daughter to marry before the firstborn, but Jacob worked another seven years and eventually married Rachel.<sup>4</sup> During their marriage, Rachel desired children, was angry about not being able to have her children, and then permitted Jacob to sleep with their enslaved servant.<sup>5</sup> Eventually, Jacob and Esau reconciled. Jacob had twelve sons, but he had one, Joseph, whom Jacob (Israel) loved more than the other sons.<sup>6</sup> Joseph had a

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1. Genesis 12:1-3.

2. Genesis 16:4.

3. Genesis 20:1-7.

4. Genesis 29: 26-30.

5. Genesis 30:1-11.

6. Genesis 37:3.

dream that he shared with his brothers, and they plotted to kill him. Joseph's brothers lied to their father Jacob and sold him into slavery. Joseph spent years away from his family, worked for his father-in-law, and became an administrator in Egypt for Pharaoh. Eventually, Joseph reconciled with his brothers and father and brought the Israelites to Egypt to settle and thrive.

Here are a few patterns that we see throughout these stories: 1) Abraham lied about Sarah being his wife, 2) Isaac lied about his wife Rebecca being his sister, 3) Jacob lied to Isaac about being Esau and stole Esau's blessing, 3) Jacob fled his home land and is lied to by Laban, forced to marry Leah instead of Rachel, 4) Jacob married Rachel, and slept with their enslaved servant and had a child with her, 5) Jacob and Esau reconciled, 6) Joseph favored by Isaac because God gave him Jacob at an old age, similar to Abraham, 7) Joseph's brothers are jealous and sell him into slavery, and 8) Joseph and his family reconciled and were blessed. These behaviors were transmitted to multiple generations of people. Despite the brokenness of these individuals, it eventually led to redemptive narratives, which is God's mission and purpose in the world. However, the story does not end there, and we will examine the exodus story and what intergenerational patterns are demonstrated by the Israelite people after being delivered from Egypt.

### **The Exodus and Israelites**

In Exodus 1, a new Pharaoh in Egypt rose to power preceding Joseph's death in 1805 BC. By Exodus 1:8, the Biblical narrative of Exodus began 400 years after Genesis concluded with the reunion of Joseph, his brother, and his father, Jacob.<sup>7</sup> This Pharaoh was unaware of Joseph's role in saving the Israelites from famine and grew fearful about the Israelites increasing in

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7. Fershtman, 59-60.



number— ultimately, he ordered that they be enslaved and that all males be murdered.<sup>8</sup> During this time, the Israelites were in a physical and spiritual exile, enslaved in *mitzrayim*, the narrowed consciousness where access to God was almost fully occluded.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, after 400 years of enslavement, the Israelites had lost faith in the prophetic promises made to their ancestor Abraham that they would one day be redeemed.<sup>10</sup> Despite promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Israelites turned away from a God that could allow their people to suffer unfathomable horror by being enslaved.<sup>11</sup>

In Exodus 1:15-17, Pharaoh told the Hebrew midwives to kill any son the Hebrew women delivered, but the women feared God. Despite Pharaoh's earthly reign, they knew that God had the ultimate authority and power.<sup>12</sup> Shoshana Fershtman provides insights about the Israelites and the distant promises made to Abraham:

As the Book of Exodus begins, Abraham's vision has come into being. The people have been suffering under the yoke of slavery for the 400 years prophesied. The new Pharaoh, fearful that the increasing number of Jews might lead them to revolt against the oppressive conditions under which they were forced to live, has issued an edict that all male Hebrew children be killed at birth. The Hebrew people have been in a state of profound suffering for so long that they no longer hold any hope that things might be different. They have stopped crying out to God. They have given in to despair. And they have lost their connection to the sense that they have a destiny that is greater than the daily reality of the clay pits of Egypt, where the men perform the backbreaking work of building bricks for Pharaoh. They were bereft, as were so many Jews in the wake of the

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8. Fershtman, Carolyn Shoshana, *The Mystical Exodus in Jungian Perspective: Transforming Trauma and the Wellsprings of Renewal*, (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2021), 59.

9. Fershtman, Carolyn Shoshana, *The Mystical Exodus in Jungian Perspective: Transforming Trauma and the Wellsprings of Renewal*, (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2021), 59.

10. Fershtman, *The Mystical Exodus in Jungian Perspective: Transforming Trauma and the Wellsprings of Renewal*, 60-62.

11. Fershtman, *The Mystical Exodus in Jungian Perspective: Transforming Trauma and the Wellsprings of Renewal*, 60-62.

12. Tony Evans, *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group), 240-249.

Shoah, having completely lost faith in a God that did not or could not intervene in human affairs.<sup>13</sup>

Tony Evans states that the principle here is that when God's people are faced with only sinful options, we are to choose that which brings God greater glory.<sup>14</sup> In other words, the women lied to Pharaoh to prevent the murder of innocent children made in God's image, and it ultimately led to freedom and liberation for God's people.<sup>15</sup> Moses was adopted by an Egyptian and raised like an Egyptian. Still, regardless of his adaptation to the Egyptian culture, he knew that there was something different and ultimately realized that he, too, was of the Israelites. Moses had a supernatural encounter with God on Mount Sinai, and when he first came down from the mountain after his encounter with the burning bush, the people were skeptical.<sup>16</sup> Ultimately, Moses became the mouthpiece of God and requested that the Israelites be set free from enslavement. God sent plagues to Egypt and warning signs to Pharaoh directly, eventually leading to freedom for the Israelites.

The exodus narrative demonstrates the implications of intergenerational trauma and its effects on people who do not address their trauma and wrestle with the dualistic nature of new life with God and the old oppressive mentality of Egypt. Despite new freedoms and the journey towards the Promised Land, we must acknowledge that overcoming 400 years of enslavement and Egyptian culture does not dissolve within days, weeks, or even years. How did the Israelites

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13. Fershtman, *The Mystical Exodus in Jungian Perspective: Transforming Trauma and the Wellsprings of Renewal*, 71.

14. Evans, *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, 240-249.

15. Evans, *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, 240-249.

16. Fershtman, *The Mystical Exodus in Jungian Perspective: Transforming Trauma and the Wellsprings of Renewal*, 140-141.

view their relationship with God during this time? What transgenerational trauma was transmitted based on their experiences in Egypt and 400 years of silence from God? How might this impact them going forward and seeking to establish a new life in the Promised Land? What thoughts did the Israelites have about Moses being that he culturally represented the oppressor but ethnically represented the Israelites? Although the Exodus story is about deliverance, freedom, and liberation, it is also a story of the post-traumatic process due to intergenerational trauma. As the Israelites traveled with God, evident signs of trauma transmitted are found throughout Exodus and the entire Old Testament.

Exodus 34:6-7 states, “And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding love and faithfulness, maintaining in love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation. This passage precedes the Israelites building a golden calf to worship while Moses was on the mountain receiving instruction from God for the people. These two verses in Exodus also allude to God punishing the Israelite children of future generations because of the sinful actions of their parents.<sup>17</sup> Building idols were not the only habit that the Israelites adopted from Egypt, but they lacked faith, cursed the name of God, carried anger, hardened their hearts, and carried resentment within their hearts.<sup>18</sup> It is evident that transgenerational trauma continued manifesting within Moses’ generation, and God began transitioning Moses and the Israelites. In

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17. Ashley Hooker, *What Is Generational trauma and Is it in the Bible?* (Crosswalk.com, October 16, 2020, accessed March 22, 2022), <https://www.crosswalk.com/family/parenting/what-is-generational-trauma-and-is-it-in-the-bible.html>.

18. Genesis 32:1-10, 34-38.

Deuteronomy 31, Moses transitioned leadership to Joshua and communicated final instructions to the Israelites:

“I am 120 years old today. I am no longer able to go out and come in. The LORD has said to me, ‘You shall not go over this Jordan.’ The LORD, your God himself, will go over before you. He will destroy these nations before you so that you shall dispossess them, and Joshua will go over at your head, as the LORD has spoken. And the LORD will do to them as he did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, and their land when he destroyed them. And the LORD will give them over to you, and you shall do to them according to the whole commandment that I have commanded you. Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.” Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, “Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land that the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall put them in possession of it. It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”<sup>19</sup>

Moses finished writing the law and commanded the Levites to take the Book of the law and put it by the ark of the covenant.<sup>20</sup> Moses understood how rebellious and stubborn his generation was against the Lord and knew they would act corruptly after his death and not adhere to God’s law.<sup>21</sup> After witnessing the failures of his generation, Moses spoke directly to Joshua and prayed a blessing over his generation. This statement by Moses reveals intergenerational trauma that continued to impact the Israelites after being delivered from Egypt. God delivered Moses concluded by warning the Israelites— “Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law. For it is no empty word for you, but your very life, and by this word, you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.”<sup>22</sup> Moses encouraged the next

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19. Deuteronomy 31:2-8.

20. Deuteronomy 31:24-16.

21. Deuteronomy 31:27-29.

22. Deuteronomy 32:46-47.

generation to end intergenerational trauma or generational sins by not transmitting them to the next generation. At the end of Moses' life, we see God transition leadership, and it took a generation dying off for the Israelites to enter the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua. Moreover, throughout the Old Testament, we see evidence of the Israelites never achieving their mission and purpose. Thus, the second exodus and the second Moses, Christ. Black Christianity resonates with much of the Genesis narrative and the exodus narrative. Therefore, it is essential to examine further the importance of Black ecclesiology within the American Church and culture.

### **The Importance of Black Ecclesiology**

It is undeniable that Black ecclesiology is deeply rooted in the Exodus story centered on deliverance and liberation for enslaved people oppressed for 400-years. Likewise, the importance of Africans in fulfilling the Abrahamic promises can be seen in the much-neglected story of Jacob, Ephraim, and Manasseh.<sup>23</sup> Esau McCaulley described the parallels remarkably by stating:

Black Christians will be familiar with the story of Joseph, who was enslaved and sold by his brothers to Egypt. Still eventually, he rose to power, ending up second only to Pharaoh. Pharaoh also gave Joseph an Egyptian wife, Asenath, by whom he had two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. After the dramatic Reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers, the family reunited and took up residence in Egypt. Toward the end of Jacob's life, Joseph brought his two boys to be blessed by his father. Meeting these two half-Egyptian, half-Jewish boys caused Jacob to recall the promise that God made him many years prior. Jacob saw the Brown flesh and African origin of these boys as the beginning of God's fulfillment of his promises to make Jacob a community of different nations and ethnicities. For that reason, he claimed these two boys as his own. These two boys become two of the twelve tribes of Israel. Egypt and Africa are not outside of God's people; African blood flowed into Israel from the beginning to fulfill the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.<sup>24</sup>

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24. McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as An Exercise in Hope*, 108.

25. McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as An Exercise in Hope*, 108.

God's redemption, liberation, and freedom from the powers of oppression are deeply embedded within Black ecclesiology. Moreover, resilience, Reconciliation, joy, praise, and protest are significant values within Black ecclesiology, thus active engagement with social issues. The Black church was described as the body, entity, or institution formed in hush harbors of plantations— secret gathering places for the enslaved to engage in their religious and spiritual practices, which has evolved into a central place of community protest, and worship.<sup>25</sup> The Black church was not only a place of refuge but regarded as a sacred gathering where Black people could fully be themselves without fear and shame. The covert nature of the Black church led some to call it the “invisible institution.”<sup>26</sup> The Black church experience is vast, complex, nuanced, and diverse. White leaders must understand why the Black church exists, and it begins with understanding the history and impact of slavery and racism. Esau McCaulley gives a vitally important perspective of ecclesiology concerning the Black Church. One of the difficulties for predominantly White evangelical organizations is attempting to become multi-ethnic organizations without understanding the Black ecclesiological context.<sup>27</sup> Understanding Black ecclesiology is essential for addressing negative stereotypes that White Christians have formed about Black churches and Black leaders. Chapter three of this project will examine this discussion.

For centuries, Black Christians had found their hope in the Black church because it was their place of being known, valued, and accepted— when their country, jobs, communities, and White Christians failed them. Theologian James Cone has affirmed that God is on the side of the

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26. Jamar A. Boyd, *The Importance of a Thriving Black Church* (Sojourners, 2019, Accessed October 17, 2021) <https://sojo.net/articles/importance-thriving-Black-church>.

27. Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism*, 68.

28. McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as An Exercise in Hope*, 110.

oppressed, but it does not mean that the oppressed are more righteous than the oppressor. Amidst oppression, the Black church has played a crucial role in restoring human dignity individually and corporately for Black people. Liberation theology has its roots in Black Ecclesiology, which conflicts with evangelical beliefs and theology. Due to false and insignificant research done in Black ecclesiology by Evangelicalism, the White evangelical understanding of liberation theology and the Black church contributes to the racial divide. The reality is that many White evangelicals lack meaningful relationships and intentional discipleship, mentorship, and submission to Black authority, particularly Black Christians.

Thus far, I have demonstrated the Biblical implications of intergenerational trauma dating back to Abraham. We see a variety of patterns, symptoms, and behaviors. We have identified how trauma manifested and how God ultimately resolved intergenerational trauma by permitting an entire generation to die to ensure that His people, the Israelites, could prosper. The first exodus served as the basis for the hope of the second act of God's redemption.<sup>28</sup> If you track the Israelite story throughout the Old Testament, you will see various signs of trauma transmitted and manifested within multiple generations. It is crucial to recall various resets after several generations failed to demonstrate God's mission for the world. We see this clearly before Israel moved to Egypt and after Moses died, but most important, because Israel historically struggled to model God's mission, He ultimately sent Jesus to this earth for the salvation of all and the redemption of humanity. This was God's mission for the world, but God had to end various cycles of trauma by allowing human nature for control, power, and greed to lead generations down a road of suffering, death, and persecution. Still, God brought liberation and freedom from the cycles of trauma by sending Christ to earth for humanity's redemption.

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23. McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as An Exercise in Hope*, 90-91.

I found the Genesis and Exodus narrative necessary for this discussion because it is a narrative that profoundly resonates with Black culture, ecclesiology, and community. Despite similarities and differences, the exodus story of God's deliverance from oppression and bondage serves as a consistent theme of joy in the midst of suffering on earth. Moreover, through Black ecclesiology and activism, we find themes of hope, liberation, and resilience that fundamentally shape who Black people are in America. In God's redemptive nature, He draws all people unto Himself for the hope of our salvation in Christ. This is evident and embedded within Black ecclesiology and throughout the Israelites' narrative in the Old Testament. Understanding Christianity through the lens of Black people, Black ecclesiology, and Black culture is helpful for White evangelical leaders seeking to understand intergenerational trauma and its effects on Black leaders.

Furthermore, leaders lack proper teaching and training for educators familiar with Black ecclesiology, the Black church, and the Black experience because seminaries continue to teach doctrines rooted in a European and German understanding of Scripture. This is not exclusive to White leaders but also Black leaders. Carter G. Woodson wrote a staggering critique regarding the inability of U.S. seminaries to adequately train future Black church leaders to respond to their people's social crises.<sup>29</sup>

The notion and expectation for clergy to attend seminaries to be ordained and recognized as credible have left many in severe debt. According to some data from the Associate of Theological Schools, debt incurred by Black graduates in the 2019-2020 academic year averaged

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29. Richard N. Williams, *"The Mis-Education of the Negro Seminarian"* (Sojourners, May 19, 2017, accessed March 25, 2022), <https://sojo.net/articles/mis-education-negro-seminarian>.



\$42,7000, compared with \$31,200 for White graduates.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, data shows that 30% of Black graduates in the 2020-2021 academic year had \$40,000 or more debt than 11% of White graduates.<sup>31</sup> In a 2019 Christian Century essay, scholars noted that the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference study found that one-third of Black pastors believed they were “fairly and adequately compensated as a professional,” while 67% said they had “particular financial stress” at that current time.<sup>32</sup> White evangelicals must avoid associating with only Black leaders who affirm their beliefs because their relationships and understanding of the Black church must be as diverse as the Black church.

These are current realities for many Black leaders, and it speaks to the system of inequality at large. It requires empathy and proximity for Black clergy to understand why activism and advocacy for the Black community are essential to Black ecclesiology. If White leaders desire to learn about the impact of being proximate to Black leaders and the Black church, consider scholar Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his time in Harlem, New York. In Harlem, Bonhoeffer learned of a Black tradition of Jesus that connected faithfulness to God, the recognition of suffering, and the presence of Christ as co-sufferer.<sup>33</sup> The impact of Bonhoeffer’s time in Harlem became noticeably different because his perspective was not merely academic,

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30. Adelle M. Banks and Religion News Service “*Black seminary grads, with debt higher than others, cope with money and ministry*” (The Presbyterian Outlook, February 18, 2022, accessed March 25, 2022), <https://pres-outlook.org/2022/02/Black-seminary-grads-with-debt-higher-than-others-cope-with-money-and-ministry/>.

31. Adelle M. Banks and Religion News Service “*Black seminary grads, with debt higher than others, cope with money and ministry.*”

32. Adelle M. Banks and Religion News Service “*Black seminary grads, with debt higher than others, cope with money and ministry.*”

33. Reggie L. Williams, *Bonhoeffer’s Black Jesus: Harlem Renaissance Theology and an Ethic of Resistance* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 104.

but the Sermon on the Mount became relevant command for everyday life.<sup>34</sup> This led Bonhoeffer to experience true solidarity with Black people and inspired him to become an advocate for peace and social justice.<sup>35</sup>

One thing worth considering is how Christians believe there is a need for separated spaces for Black gatherings, where they do not have to engage with White people's constant struggle over racial hegemony. If White leaders desire to see God's Kingdom on earth, their understanding and perspective of the Black church and its complexities and diverse theology must evolve. Also, if they genuinely desire to understand intergenerational trauma and its effects on Black leaders working within their predominantly White organizations. Esau McCaulley states, "Similar to the Israelites after leaving Egypt, Black Christians who came to Christ surrounded by the false Gospel given to them by their slave masters were right to see a God worthy of their trust in the exodus narrative."<sup>36</sup> In addition, some Black ancestors never saw freedom from enslavement like Moses. However, hope in God and eventual liberation and freedom put our Black ancestors' suffering into perspective because they were not in vain. This is the hope embedded within Black ecclesiology, thus the importance of predominantly White organizations creating space for it to flourish. Despite slavery in America, Black grandmothers and grandfathers challenged their families to remain engaged with the faith. It was Black ecclesiology and the sacrifices of Black ancestors that brought freedoms for Black Americans today.

Black ecclesiology reminds us of similar struggles the Israelites faced in Egypt, wandering in the desert for forty years and anticipating hope found in God's promises. Dr.

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34. Williams, 109. See letter from Dietrich Bonhoeffer to Elisabeth Zinn, January 27, 1936, in DBWE 13:285.

36. McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as An Exercise in Hope*, 90.

Martin Luther King Jr. used the Exodus story and the Promised Land as metaphors for the freedom journey of Black people in America.<sup>37</sup> In the exodus story, Pharaoh embodies systemic racism set up to resist God's plan for people of color, and that was due to a hardened heart against the Lord's commands.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, Black people continue to persevere and cling to the exodus narrative of resilience and future hope despite racial battle fatigue and intergenerational trauma. Moreover, Black ecclesiology is deeply rooted in the second exodus. Thus, its core values are rooted in resilience, activism, spirituality, and aspirations that counter oppressive stereotypes and narratives that speak to the importance of racial justice and Black ecclesiology.<sup>39</sup> Black ecclesiology is not only powerful in its expression but also in its demonstration that seeks the redemptive nature of God's justice to the world. This is precisely why understanding intergenerational trauma is essential when discussing racial justice and the redemptive narrative of Scripture.

### **Tom Skinner and Racial Justice**

Tom Skinner was one of the most profound Black leaders to address racial justice and Reconciliation. Skinner wrote, "Any gospel that does not...speak to the issue of enslavement and injustice and inequality—any gospel that does not want to go where people are hungry and poverty-stricken and set them free in the name of Jesus Christ—is not the gospel."<sup>40</sup> Skinner's primary message is of Christ as a radical revolutionary who was not White and had something to offer Black people in America. Considering historical events like the Civil Rights Movement,

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37. Sheila Wise Rowe, *Healing Racial Trauma: The Road to Resilience* (Westmont, IL: IVP Books, 2020), 36.

38. Rowe, *Healing Racial Trauma: The Road to Resilience*, 36-38.

39. J. Rappaport and R. Simkins, *Healing and Empowering Through Community Narrative*, (Prevention in Human Services 10, no. 1, 1991), 29-50.

40. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* (Random House Publishing Group, 2019), 14-35.

this message resonated with many young Black people in the 1960s and 1970s because it reframed Christ and His Kingdom. Skinner preached the separation between Christ, the radical revolutionary, and White Christianity, which many Black people rejected. Skinner believed that attempting to change a system without a radical change in the fundamental nature of man was a futile revolution.<sup>41</sup> Pleading with Black Christians, Skinner states:

“I reiterate: If the Black revolution is going to be effective –economically, socially, politically –if it is going to make the kind of moral and spiritual impact that it ought to make on the world, if it is going to show men how they ought to live and how they ought to lead, if the Black man is ever going to teach his White brother what it really means to be moral, the leadership must come from people who are Christ’s men, people who are intoxicated with Christ, people who have been with Jesus, people who reflect the life of Jesus. And that reflection of the life of Jesus is not your attempt to imitate Him; it is not you’re going out struggling and breaking your neck trying to be a Christian; it is not carrying a bunch of rules and regulations around in your pocket; it is not a matter of not drinking, smoking, nightclubbing, mini-skirting, or anything else. It is a matter of letting Jesus Christ, who is God, live His life in you, based on your availability to Him –it is, in essence, becoming His slave.”<sup>42</sup>

Skinner’s perspective provides a valuable framework that communicates present-day tensions Black millennials face as they leave predominantly White organizations. Leaders must become intoxicated with Christ, who is concerned with the economic, social, and political outcomes that oppress Black people. Skinner urges Black people fighting against the systems of racism to behave and reflect the life of Christ.<sup>43</sup> Skinner says, “Your attitude toward people, your attitude toward injustice, your attitude toward poverty, your attitude toward hunger, your attitude toward the inequities of society, your attitude toward government, toward money, toward your home,

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41. Tom Skinner, *How Black Is The Gospel: A Decisive and Truthful Message for Today’s Revolution* (Skinner Leadership Institute), 1231 (Kindle Edition).

42. Skinner, *How Black Is The Gospel: A Decisive and Truthful Message for Today’s Revolution*, 1228-1238 (Kindle Edition).

43. Skinner, *How Black Is The Gospel: A Decisive and Truthful Message for Today’s Revolution*, 1228-1238 (Kindle Edition).

toward your position, all begin to fall into place and take on the point of view Jesus Christ would have had about all of those issues.”<sup>44</sup>

Skinner draws these conclusions using Acts 4:13-21 and how Peter and John offended Pharisees and the establishment, the Roman Empire, preaching in the name of Jesus. It was evident that the Pharisees and others witnessed the confidence and boldness of Peter and John because the countenance and power of God were obvious. Peter and John were directly proclaiming the resurrection of Christ, which was in direct opposition to the Roman Empire. The posture and boldness Peter and John had is Skinner’s employers’ Black people’s posture and boldness. The posture and boldness are only found by imitating Christ, which overcomes oppression and racial injustices. For Peter and John, preaching about Christ’s life and resurrection was speaking out against the injustices of the Roman Empire and the Church’s complicity and submission to the empire instead of submission to God. Skinner says, “Perhaps the shame of the church in the twentieth century is that it has not been bold. Perhaps the reason that we have come to this revolutionary hour, where blood may well flow in our streets, is because of the inequities and injustices and exploitation of the Black man, and now because of his anger. This has had to happen because the church has not been a true church; it has not obeyed the claims of God to live oblivious to public opinion. It has proved by its very structure that it is an institution, and institutions, by their very nature, are conservative because they must conserve what they have accumulated; and they tend to protect the society that helps them and tempts them rather than addressing themselves to that society.”<sup>45</sup> Skinner believed in the radical

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44. Skinner, *How Black Is The Gospel: A Decisive and Truthful Message for Today’s Revolution*, 1238 (Kindle Edition).

45. Skinner, *How Black Is The Gospel: A Decisive and Truthful Message for Today’s Revolution*, 1260 (Kindle Edition).

nature of Christ and how He never owed His allegiance to anybody— not to the Jewish religious sects nor the Roman Empire, but God and His Kingdom.<sup>46</sup>

Skinner exposes how imitating and being intoxicated with Christ eliminates Christians from being complicit and compliant with injustices and corrupt institutions. He challenges pastors who claim to be faithful to have courage by preaching the truth, even if it means losing their pulpits. The way forward for leaders is by being faithful to Christ and humanity, by radically imitating Christ. Skinner's perspective is helpful when considering the topics and approach to injustice within Black culture. It is rooted in reflecting Christ, which has implications of challenging institutions and injustices in the world that oppress Black people. Understanding Christianity through the lens of Black people, Black ecclesiology, and Black culture is helpful for White evangelical leaders seeking to understand intergenerational trauma and racial justice. However, there are conflicting opinions concerning racial justice and its intersecting with Scripture. I suggest that these differences are due to various perspectives concerning the Kingdom of God, humans created in God's image, and the Church's role on the earth. This next section will examine the various perspectives concerning the Kingdom of God, the doctrine of humanity, the Church's role, and if intergenerational trauma transmits from generations.

### **The Kingdom of God**

Tony Evans defines the Kingdom of God as the sovereign and comprehensive rule of God over all of His creation.<sup>47</sup> God's Kingdom is the entire universe, and the job of the Holy

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46. Skinner, *How Black Is The Gospel: A Decisive and Truthful Message for Today's Revolution*, 1260 (Kindle Edition).

47. Evans, *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group), 455 (Kindle Edition).

Spirit is to bring people to recognize God's right to rule as King and submit to his authority.<sup>48</sup> Evans drew this conclusion by implying that Jesus revealed to His disciples how His early Kingdom would be established and set up through communities God established called the Church.<sup>49</sup> George Ladd believes, "the Biblical idea of God's Kingdom is deeply rooted in the Old Testament and is grounded in the confidence that there is one eternal, living God who has revealed Himself to men and who has a purpose for the human race which He has chosen to accomplish through Israel. Therefore, the Biblical hope is a religious hope; it is an essential element in the revealed will and the redemptive work of the living God."<sup>50</sup> In essence, the Kingdom is an inheritance that God has and will bestow upon His people when Christ comes in glory.<sup>51</sup> Adolf Von Harnack reduced God's Kingdom to the subjective realm and understood it in terms of the human spirit and its relationship to God.<sup>52</sup> C.H. Dodd believes God's Kingdom is Christ entering into time and space.<sup>53</sup> Albert Schweitzer concedes, "Jesus' message of the Kingdom as an apocalyptic realm to be inaugurated by a supernatural act of God when history will be broken off and a new heavenly order of existence begun. The Kingdom of God in no sense of the word is a present or a spiritual reality; it is altogether future and supernatural." Various scholars have taught a modified interpretation of God's Kingdom and believe that God's

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48. Evans, *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, 463 (Kindle Edition).

49. Evans, *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, 463 (Kindle Edition).

50. George Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: MI, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959), 14.

51. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 17.

52. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 15.

53. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 15-30.

Kingdom may be identified with the true Church embodied in the visible professing Church.<sup>54</sup> Even though the Kingdom of God is a general phrase used in Christianity, Mujerista Theology and the Kin-dom of God has become popular among various scholars and liberation theologians.

### **Mujerista Theology**

Despite diverse interpretations of the Kingdom of God, how does God's Kingdom address the liberation of all human beings amidst oppression and suffering? Latin Feminist scholar, Ada María Isasi-Díaz, makes a compelling argument for re-framing and re-imagining the Kingdom of God by challenging the traditional interpretation of the scriptural view of a Kingdom of God as a metaphor for the coming world order.<sup>55</sup> Isasi-Díaz roots her ideology and theological framework in Mujerista Liberation theology, based on Matthew 22:36-40. Mujerista theology is dedicated to Latinas' liberation, based on the Latina women's struggle for freedom in America.<sup>56</sup> The theological implications of Mujerista include both ethnic and systematic theology as a liberative praxis—a process of enablement for Latina women which insists on the development of a strong sense of moral agency and clarifies the importance and value of who they are, what they think, and what they do.<sup>57</sup> Mujerista theology seeks to impact mainline theologies that support what is normative in church, and at large, in society—that has not been set by non-Hispanics and to the exclusion of Latinas and Latinos.<sup>58</sup> Mujerista theology focuses

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54. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 15-30.

55. Ellen Stevens, *We Are Family: Thoughts on the Kin-dom of God*, Feminist Theology 2: The Seattle School of Theology and Psychology, Medium, 2016, accessed (June 19, 2021), <https://medium.com/feminist-theology-2/we-are-family-views-on-the-kin-dom-of-god-fc63cc3b1a6a>.

56. Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 60.

57. Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century*, 61.

58. Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century*, 61.



on the fullness and liberation of life that cannot be attained through the oppression of others.<sup>59</sup> In a sense, Mujerista theology, or the Kin-dom of God, centers around communities and families getting liberated through oneness, hope, and dreams of family and relationships as a sustaining foundation for all societal and spiritual experiences.<sup>60</sup>

According to the Isasi- Díaz, the historical view of the Kin-dom suggested a form of inclusion in which groups of people lived together with the same beliefs and culture, contrary to the current understanding of the kingdom.” Isasi-Díaz refrained from using the word “kingdom” because she believes it has a sexist connotation, implying that God is male.<sup>61</sup> She also believes that the concept of the kingdom today is both hierarchical and elitist, thus her use of kin-dom.<sup>62</sup> Kin-dom, according to Isasi-Díaz, “makes it clear that when the fullness of God becomes a day-to-day reality in our world, we will all be kin to each other.” The implications of kinship will be explored in the section addressing human beings created in God’s image.

Isasi-Díaz believes that kinship is achieved through true solidarity. Solidarity is the union of kindred persons arising from the common responsibilities and interests, such as between classes, peoples, or groups; community of interest, feelings, purposes, or action; social cohesion.<sup>63</sup> This definition of solidarity is helpful because it also refers to the cohesiveness that needs to exist among communities of struggle. Isasi-Díaz states:

“From a Christian perspective, the goal of solidarity is to participate in the ongoing process of liberation through which we Christians become a significantly positive force in

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59. Stevens, *We Are Family: Thoughts on the Kin-dom of God*.

60. Stevens, *We Are Family: Thoughts on the Kin-dom of God*.

61. Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century*, 119.

62. Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century*, 119-121.

63. *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, 2nd unabridged ed. (New York, NY: Random House, 1987).

the unfolding of the kin-dom of God. At the center of the unfolding of the kin-dom is the salvific act of God. Salvation and liberation are interconnected. Salvation is gratuitously given by God; it flows from the very essence of God, love. Salvation is worked out through the love between God and each human being and among human beings. This love relationship is the goal of all life— it constitutes the fullness of humanity. Therefore, love sets in motion and sustains the ongoing act of God’s salvation in which each person necessarily participates, since love requires, per se, active involvement of those who are in a relationship.”<sup>64</sup>

Isasi-Díaz believes solidarity moves away from the false notion of disinterest, of doing for others in an altruistic fashion— instead, it gets grounded in common responsibilities and interests.<sup>65</sup> Isasi-Díaz critiques Kingdom theology’s historical narrative, interpretation, and practices because it does not factor in the oppressed and marginalized. Gustavo Gutiérrez says, “Without liberating historical events, there would be no growth of the Kingdom.... We can say that the historical, political, liberating event is the growth of the Kingdom and is a salvific event; but it is not the coming of the Kingdom, not all of salvation.”<sup>66</sup>

One of the main obstacles unfolding kin-dom is the alienation from God and each other experienced by all in and through the oppressive societal categories and structures that cause and sustain oppression.<sup>67</sup> Alienation is a personal and structural sin that affects the person’s totality and relationship with God and others.<sup>68</sup> Mujerista theology, at its core, exposes several tensions surrounding the theology of the Kingdom of God. For Isasi-Díaz, mutuality, solidarity, and Mujerista theology ensure the liberation of the oppressed and marginalized. However, justice has

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65. *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*.

66. Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century*, 86.

67. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973), 159.

68. Rebecca S. Chopp, *Praxis of Suffering* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), 25.

to prevail for a person to become fully human, overcome sin, and move from alienation to a love relationship with God and others.<sup>69</sup> As a virtue, justice is a trait of character empowering and disposing an agent to act in ways constitutive of human flourishing.<sup>70</sup>

Isasi-Díaz sums up her beliefs concerning the kin-dom of God by stating: “Given the network of oppressive structures in our world today that control and dominate the vast majority of human beings, the only way we can continue to claim the centrality of love of neighbor for Christians is to redefine what it means and what it demands of us. Solidarity, then, becomes the new way of understanding and living out this commandment of the gospel.”<sup>71</sup> Mujerista theology provides a useful framework that challenges normative interpretations of the Kingdom of God, and it is vitally important that leaders consider the arguments made by Isasi-Díaz. Mujerista provides a helpful theological approach to understanding God’s Kingdom, the historical oppression of the phrase, and why Mujerista theology is vital in the discussion of Christians living out the mission of God. Mujerista theology has created conversations within feminism and liberation theology and speaks to the damage done by abusive interpretations of God’s Kingdom. Mujerista theology acknowledges the oppression of the marginalized, which further demonstrates the importance of understanding intergenerational trauma and its effects on Black leaders. Considering these perspectives, what are the eschatological implications of God’s Kingdom? Christians must consider the impact of God’s Kingdom and how it impacts our calling and mission for the world because God’s eschatological vision is Reconciliation.<sup>72</sup>

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69. Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century*, 87.

70. Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century*, 97.

71. James F. Childress and John Macquarrie, eds., *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1986), 338.

72. McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as An Exercise in Hope*, 108.

## **The Implications of God's Kingdom**

It is nearly impossible to discuss the Kingdom of God without addressing its eschatological implications or the “already but not yet.” What are the implications of the future Kingdom of God for Christians, and how does it influence their biblical and theological understanding of humanity? These themes will highlight what God may be doing in the world. Christian's identity centers around Christians remembering that they are created beings in God's image, but God has a Kingdom reign and rules the earth. Although the world is filled with sin and wickedness, Christians are called to radiate Christ, but the Church is also called to reflect God's Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is a present reality (Matt 12:28) but also a future reality (1 Cor 15:50) that will be referred to as the “already but not yet,” or in more theological terms, Eschatology, or the Second Coming of Christ. The heart of God's Kingdom was Jesus' inner experience of God as Father, and His mission was to share this experience with the world.<sup>73</sup> God's Kingdom is a mysteriously nuanced topic, but this chapter does not explore the depths of mystery. Instead, it describes the purpose of the Kingdom on earth and in the lives of Christians.

God calls Christians to live out the Kingdom agenda on earth by making Kingdom disciples who pursue the call to one new humanity instituted by Christ. The Kingdom agenda is the visible manifestation of the comprehensive rule of God over every area of life.<sup>74</sup> The futuristic aspect of God's Kingdom does not permit Christians to sit idly waiting on the return of Christ. Instead, God uses history and our present-day living to reveal Christ and His world mission and point toward what is coming in the future. The mandate is that Christians exhibit behaviors that reflect and model the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. This is essential to

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73. George E. Ladd, *A New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), 82.

74. Evans, *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, 468.

understanding the redemptive and reconciling nature of God. This section will help leaders meditate on the purpose of Reconciliation by examining the patterns of the early Church when it comes to ethnic diversity and inclusion of the gentiles. It is nearly impossible to discuss the Kingdom of God without addressing its eschatological implications, the “already but not yet.” What are the implications of the future Kingdom of God for Christians, and how does it influence their biblical and theological understanding of humanity? These themes will highlight what God may be doing in the world. By understanding what God is doing in the world, leaders can serve their organizations because they have greater clarity of their role as the Church. When considering biblical and theological perspectives of God’s Kingdom, leaders can wrestle with the emotional impact on humans and their identity.

George Ladd believes the mandate is that Christians exhibit behaviors that reflect and model the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.<sup>75</sup> This is essential to understanding Reconciliation and God’s redemptive nature. Oscar Cullmann clarifies God’s redemptive nature by inferring that the Biblical worldview involves a linear concept and that “eternity” as it belongs to redemptive history is simply unending time.<sup>76</sup> The Greek word for world is *Kosmos*, and to understand God’s eschatological work, the keywords must be defined. According to George Ladd, *Kosmos* is something that is in proper order or harmony, something which enjoys

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75. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 82-94.

76. Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster John Knox Press, 1964).

proper arrangement.<sup>77</sup> Eschatology is centered around the wordage *aion* used throughout the New Testament in two ways: “This Age” and “The Age to Come.”<sup>78</sup>

These terms and passages, such as Matthew 12:32, have been understood differently. The New International Version reads, “Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.” Whereas the King James Version reads, “And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.” The differences within these translations become problematic because Christ is not speaking of two worlds but two ages in the passage.<sup>79</sup> The word *aion* is used, not *kosmos*, which shifts interpretation and implications. This also highlights the inconsistencies found within translations that led to the historical oppression of various people groups. Inconsistencies between *aion* and *kosmos* are not only found within the gospels, but Paul addresses the age to come in Ephesians 1:21.

Another term that speaks to the eschatological implications of the kingdom is time or *kairos*. In Mark 10:29-30, Jesus says, “Truly I tell you, Jesus replied, no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life.”<sup>80</sup> The first half of this verse uses the world time, *kairos*, in place of *aion*, or age. The second half of the verse uses *aion*

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77. George E. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 25.

78. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God*, 26.

79. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God*, 25.

80. Mark 10:29-39.

again, showing that age to come refers to two periods of time, not two worlds.<sup>81</sup> The eschatological implications of the age to come, and those who follow Christ, will be freed from all opposition and sufferings and will inherently enjoy eternal life.<sup>82</sup> With this stated, how can leaders operate and lead their organizations with these eschatological implications? One consideration is how Christians interpret suffering and death.

### **Christian Suffering and Death**

As Christians, suffering, and death are essential to Christian discipleship and are expected based on the conditions of a fallen and depraved world ruled by Satan. Suffering and death happen because of sin on earth and for the sake of the Kingdom to ensure the flourishing of humanity. Christians should not avoid suffering and death because it is essential and reflects our call to embody and follow Christ. This has eternal implications, which belong to the Age to Come and God's Kingdom.<sup>83</sup> In this Age, there is death, and the righteous and wicked are mixed. In God's Kingdom, all wickedness and sin will be destroyed, and there is eternal life.<sup>84</sup> Christians living in the current age will have to reckon with Satan's kingdom that seeks to destroy God's people, but in the Age to Come, God's rule will destroy Satan, and all things will be fully restored.

If suffering and death are inevitable realities, one central question Christians must explore is what is God doing in the world? God is bringing the future into the presence of His people, and living in the future Kingdom on earth impacts human life and human dignity. The

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81. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God*, 26.

82. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God*, 27.

83. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God*, 34.

84. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God*, 34.

theological concept of the “already but not yet,” centers around believers actively participating in God’s Kingdom. This section will help leaders deeply meditate on the purpose of Reconciliation by examining the patterns of the early Church and current topics within society. When it comes to ethnic diversity and inclusion, understanding what God is doing in the world helps leaders serve their organizations because they have greater clarity of their role as the Church. When considering these biblical and theological perspectives, leaders must wrestle with what may be going on emotionally within individuals as they seek to understand their purpose in life. Even beyond discipleship and psychological tensions, one question leaders must wrestle with is what does it mean to be human? We will explore five additional themes and how they create a better understanding of God’s Kingdom, intergenerational trauma, and its effects on Black leaders.

### **Biblical Justice**

Biblical justice and racial/social justice have been separately used for various purposes. Still, they are synched because God’s justice is an essential theme of Scripture, and there would not be salvation for humanity if God did not pour out his justice on Christ on the cross. The cross of Christ represents the intersection of God’s justice and God’s love that satisfied God’s righteous demands, ensuring that grace could be received by those who repent and choose faith in Christ.<sup>85</sup> Justice is a consistent theme throughout Scripture and must be examined. In Genesis 18:19-20, God reveals that he chose Abraham to command his children and household to keep the way of God by doing righteousness and justice so that Abraham would experience the promises of God. Justice, or *mish pat*, means judgment, ordinance, sentence, or act of deciding a

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85. Evans, *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, 4686 (Kindle Edition).



case.<sup>86</sup> Tony Evans says that in Scripture, the word “justice” means to prescribe the right way.<sup>87</sup> Considering the context of this passage, God’s justice demanded that proof of sin should be demonstrated to the sinner.<sup>88</sup> After his covenant of circumcision, three men visited Abraham were, the Lord and two Angels.<sup>89</sup> Typically, anytime an “angel of the Lord,” or the “commander of the Lord’s army,” appears, this is a “Christophany,” or a pre-incarnate but visible manifestation of the Second Person of the Trinity Christ.<sup>90</sup> This was God’s way of reaffirming His covenant with Abraham, but God was on a mission of judgment toward Sodom and Gomorrah.<sup>91</sup> God led Abraham and his family away from Sodom because He would punish the cities for their sin against God. Abraham pleaded to God, asking that those He found righteous be protected.<sup>92</sup> The sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was immense, and their sin was serious and consisted of gross immorality, violence, and oppression of the poor.<sup>93</sup>

This serves as an example of Biblical justice—the equitable and impartial application of the rule of God’s moral law in society.<sup>94</sup> Biblical justice is not a man-made, socially imposed,

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86. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers,  
<https://www.stepBible.org/?q=version=ESV|strong=H4941&options=VHNUG>

87. Evans, Tony, *Oneness Embraced: Reconciliation, The Kingdom, and How We are Stronger Together* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2011), 269.

88. Adeyemo, Tokunboh, *Africa Bible Commentary: A One-Volume Commentary Written by 70 African Scholars* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 33.

89. Genesis 18:1-2, 19:1.

90. Evans, *Oneness Embraced: Reconciliation, The Kingdom, and How We are Stronger Together*, 344 (Kindle Edition).

91. Evans, *Oneness Embraced: Reconciliation, The Kingdom, and How We are Stronger Together*, 2361 (Kindle Edition).

92. Genesis 18:20-33.

93. Evans, *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, 2369 (Kindle Edition). Ezek 16:49-50.

94. Evans, *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, 332.

top-down system that ultimately leads to the negation of freedom.<sup>95</sup> Instead, biblical justice promotes freedom by emphasizing accountability, equality, equity, and responsibility in providing a spiritual underpinning in the personal and social realms.<sup>96</sup> Colleen Murphy distinguishes the differences between equality and equity. “Equality is the effect of treating each individual without a difference; each individual is considered without counting their measurable attributes; treated as the same as those with differing attributes.”<sup>97</sup> Equity refers to fairness and equality in outcomes, not just in support and opportunity, but social equity and mobility.”<sup>98</sup> Historically, biblical justice has had two distinct meanings for Black and White leaders and various perspectives concerning righteousness and justice. Despite being generalities, here are two views, particularly from Tony Evans and John MacArthur.

Evans defines biblical justice as the equitable and impartial application of the rule of God’s moral law in society.<sup>99</sup> For Black leaders, biblical justice speaks directly and addresses social injustices in America. For centuries, Black pastors and theologians understood biblical justice to be divinely connected to the gospel. The two are tied to Black leaders’ perspectives and understanding of justice, whereas many White pastors, such as John MacArthur, have separated

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95. Tony Evans, *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, 334

96. Tony Evans, *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, 332.

97. Colleen Murphy, *Equity vs. Equality: What’s the Difference? Here’s How Experts Explain It*, (Health.com, June 9, 2022, accessed December 12, 2022), <https://www.health.com/mind-body/health-diversity-inclusion/equity-vs-equality>. *Equity vs. Equality*, <https://www.diffen.com/difference/Equality-vs-Equity>. *Rise Module: Visualizing Equality vs. Equity*, (New York, NY: Rise, 2021, accessed December 12, 2022), <https://risetowin.org/what-we-do/educate/resource-module/equality-vs-equity/index.html>. *Equity vs. Equality: What’s the Difference— Examples & Definitions*, (Washington, DC: United Way of the National Capital Area, June 22, 2021, accessed December 12, 2022), <https://unitedwaynca.org/blog/equity-vs-equality/>.

98. Murphy, *Equity vs. Equality: What’s the Difference? Here’s How Experts Explain It*.

99. Murphy, *Equity vs. Equality: What’s the Difference? Here’s How Experts Explain It*.

biblical and social justice. According to MacArthur, social justice is a term that suggests everyone has the right to equal upward mobility, equal social privilege, and equal finances and resources.<sup>100</sup> MacArthur claims that those who believe in social justice are merely individuals who think they have been victimized by society. It is merely a sign of their human condition.<sup>101</sup> Chapter three will address these perspectives in greater detail, but leaders must understand that biblical justice is divinely connected to righteousness and the fulfillment of the Kingdom. Christians are called to be models of holistic biblical justice that do not merely focus on evangelizing the soul but also speak to the sinful and oppressive ways of social issues that the Scriptures address.

As Evans recommends, Biblical justice seeks to protect individual liberty while promoting personal responsibility.<sup>102</sup> Therefore, since God is just and the ultimate lawgiver, His laws and judgments are just and righteous and are to be applied without partiality.<sup>103</sup> Human standards do not measure God's justice and righteousness; rather, God's standard measures human justice and righteousness.<sup>104</sup> Righteousness is the divine standard God established for humanity's actions and attitudes to be acceptable to him.<sup>105</sup> Righteousness and justice are the foundations of God's throne, and His steadfast love and faithfulness go before his people. This Psalm mainly serves as a reminder and accountability for the balance of biblical justice and

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100. Evans, *Oneness Embraced: Reconciliation, The Kingdom, and How We are Stronger Together*, 248-49.

101. "Social Justice and the Gospel, Part 1," (YouTube, Uploaded by Grace to You, September 5, 2018m, accessed August 1, 2020), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ix\\_eHfGYuA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ix_eHfGYuA).

102. Evans, *Oneness Embraced: Reconciliation, The Kingdom, and How We are Stronger Together*, 269.

103. Evans, *Oneness Embraced: Reconciliation, The Kingdom, and How We are Stronger Together*, 260.

104. See *Duet 1:17; 32, Jas 4:12, Ps 19:7-9; 11:7-8, Lev 19:15, Num 15:16*.

105. Evans, *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, 589.

righteousness. Historically, White evangelicals focused on personal righteousness at the exclusion of biblical justice, not fully understanding and comprehending that the two are intertwined and inextricably connected.<sup>106</sup> Paul writes in Romans, “For the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”<sup>107</sup> Biblical justice and righteousness are connected to the call of Christians to be peacemakers on earth because peacemakers are called children of God.<sup>108</sup> Although biblical justice brings discomfort, one purpose God desires is for Christians to seek restorative justice by living as peacemakers, instituting God’s Kingdom agenda as a sign of His in-breaking Kingdom.

### **The Kingdom Agenda**

The Kingdom Agenda is instituted by Jesus as the Davidic King and hope for humanity. The Kingdom agenda is the visible manifestation of the comprehensive rule of God over every area of life.<sup>109</sup> It is in direct contradiction and conflict with the agenda of Satan, which is to deceive, divide, and distort the truth of humanity’s identity and relationship with God and neighbor.<sup>110</sup> Christians submitting to Jesus as king make it achievable for Christians to live out the Kingdom agenda. Christians must not blur the lines between the Kingdom agenda and “Christian Nationalism.” Christian nationalism is a cultural framework that idealizes and advocates a fusion of Christianity with American civic life.<sup>111</sup> This is not Christ's agenda for His

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106. Evans, *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, 332. See. *Gen 18:19; Ps 7:6, 9:16, 11:17, 33:4, 72, 89:14; Matt 12:18-20.*

107. Rom 14:17.

108. Matt 5:9.

109. Evans, *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, 468.

110. Gen 3 and 11.

111. Andrew L. Whitehead, and Samuel L. Perry, *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States* (Oxford University Press, 2020).

Kingdom and the Church. The primary way of submitting to the Kingdom agenda and representing Jesus is by drawing near to other believers, regardless of differences, and demonstrating patterns consistent with His intention and design for the world.<sup>112</sup> More explicitly stated, the Kingdom of God influences American Christianity, not the other way around.

Nevertheless, the role of biblical justice and the Kingdom's agenda is to institute God's peace on earth, involving Christians to work against all hostility to ensure the Messiah's reign and rule on the earth. To claim that Jesus envisions the end of personal hostility and not social hostility is to neglect economic and racial hostility that He seeks to reconcile and restore in the age to come. This does Kingdom theology and the work of Jesus a disservice and undergirds his Kingdom message in the gospels.<sup>113</sup> Furthermore, this affirms the Church's mission to go and make disciples of all nations.

### **Kingdom Discipleship**

Kingdom discipleship must be holistic and not merely catered to one's preference and bias. Jesus calls his followers to be Kingdom disciples who stick to his Kingdom's agenda by going out to all the earth to recruit new disciples. Kingdom disciples are believers who take part in the spiritual developmental process of progressively learning to live all of life under the lordship of Jesus and execute this by giving Jesus exclusive rights over all comforts, preferences, and biases.<sup>114</sup> This was the expectation for the disciples, and for individuals claiming the banner of Christianity, being a Kingdom disciple is non-negotiable. For more explicit expectations,

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112. Whitehead, *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States*, 468.

113. R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew, NICNT* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 169.

114. Evans, *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, 480.

consider the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. These chapters serve as the inaugural sermon of Jesus, an orientation for his disciples into the Kingdom of God. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus says, “all nations.” Suppose Christians are called to model Jesus’ methodology of discipleship. In that case, there must be an acknowledgment of the diversity represented within his immediate disciples, those that followed him, the cities that they ministered in, and the different sermons, miracles, signs, and healings that Jesus performed. Christ is the vicarious representative before God, the empathic representative who becomes a model of Christian discipleship by demonstrating Christians' interaction with one another.<sup>115</sup> In other words, the diversity of individuals, sermons, ethnic groups, genders, and cities gives insight into Jesus’ holistic approach to ministry and the gospel of the Kingdom. Kingdom disciples are essential for Christianity, but discipleship is not a monolith— it requires a diversity of disciples, which creates an opportunity for the world to be reached.

### **Diversity and Reconciliation**

While Jesus’ disciples were all ethnic Jews, they were different in terms of occupation and social status. Jesus’ disciples represented various Jewish Sectarian groups such as the Herodians, Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, and Zealots. Jesus even called a tax collector to follow him, thus further proving the importance of local and diversity within disciplining relationships. Therefore, Jesus’ claim to go and make disciples does not infer or imply homogeneous disciples. This is further exemplified through the ministry of Paul and the disciples in the book of Acts and throughout the Epistles. Paul’s disciples were also from various regions, ethnic groups, economic statuses, and genders. Every disciple of Jesus has a role to reveal His

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115. Williams, *Bonhoeffer’s Black Jesus: Harlem Renaissance Theology and An Ethic of Resistance*, 3-10.

Kingdom to those far from His Kingdom. But it requires a diversity of Kingdom disciples working together, and not in sectors that merely reflect your tribe, social location, or ethnicity.

Undeniably, many evangelicals believe and affirm discipleship as essential to the flourishing of Christianity and the Church. However, there has been a subjective interpretation of the phrase “all nations” and the Kingdom of God. Kingdom disciples are called to reproduce Kingdom disciples who participate in the reconciling work of the Kingdom of God on earth. Kingdom disciples are called to closely hold the tensions between the present Kingdom reality and the future Kingdom reality. Also, understanding that the “present age” and the “age to come” are grinding against one another, like upper and lower millstones, as God’s new world is brought to birth.<sup>116</sup> God’s Kingdom does not allow for human government to either trump His rule or get so close to influencing His Church that it weakens the Church’s distinctive nature, presence, or biblical worldview operating in the culture.<sup>117</sup> Isaiah looks to create a new heaven and earth, like John does in Revelation, after God changes Israel’s social and political lives.<sup>118</sup> Kingdom discipleship happens when an inclusive community is lived out, for the glory of God, through the understanding of perspectives, cultures, social location, and individual experiences that lead to critical thinking, knowledge, and application for the transformation of the core self. This is critical if evangelicals desire to understand intergenerational trauma, its effects on Black leaders, and the importance of reconciliation. However, what is Reconciliation’s implications when considering how Christians partner with God’s work in the world? Reconciliation is essential to

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116. N.T. Wright, *Paul: A Biography* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2018), 140-143.

117. Evans, *Oneness Embrace: Reconciliation, The Kingdom, and How We Are Stronger Together*, 23.

118. McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as An Exercise in Hope*, 60. Is 65:13-17, 42:9.

understanding the redemptive work of Christ and God's Kingdom. However, there are a variety of perspectives concerning Reconciliation, and we will further examine how it impacts leaders.

Reconciliation is essential to biblical justice, the Kingdom agenda, and Kingdom discipleship. Christianity does not exist without Reconciliation between God and humanity. For Christians, the number one priority must be their relationship with God before there is any hope of living reconciled relationships with others. Jemar Tisby believes that racial Reconciliation within humanity has been distorted and hijacked by evangelicals because of their complicity and silence.<sup>119</sup> One of the more appropriate ways this is manifested is through racial injustices and tensions. Although "race" is not a biblical term, the implications and importance of racial Reconciliation are essential to the Christian witness to the world. The term race is a social construct that is biologically false, bolstered and established by America. According to Brenda Salter McNeil, racial Reconciliation is an ongoing spiritual process involving forgiveness, repentance, and justice that restores broken relationships and systems to reflect God's original intention for all creation to flourish.<sup>120</sup> In more explicit terms, restoring a previously broken relationship is based on repentance, repair, and forgiveness.<sup>121</sup> Reconciliation scholar Curtis DeYoung encourages the body of Christ to be radically unifying and incisive as he writes,

In the household of faith, our relationship with God takes priority over our relatedness to family, race, culture, nation, gender, or any other group we belong to. This reordering also transforms how we relate to each other. The concept of family was reconstructed in the household of God. The terms sister, brother, mother, father, friend, and neighbor were all reinterpreted and redefined by Jesus. As Jesus said, "For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:50). The household of God is an image that beckons the community of Jesus Christ to be a place of

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119. Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism*, 20-89.

120. Brenda Salter McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation: Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness and Justice* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 196.

121. Evans, *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, 570.



convergence for the great rivers of humanity. People of all cultures, races, languages, nations, tribes, and clans reside in the household of faith.<sup>122</sup>

Reconciliation was always God's plan throughout Scripture, despite the fall and the human state of depravity. Exodus 12:38 says that "a mixed crowd" went up with them when considering the exodus story, referring to non-Israelites.<sup>123</sup> McCaulley states that a better translation of Exodus 12:38 would be that many different ethnic groups came out of Egypt and that Black and Brown bodies newly liberated from slavery were other Middle Eastern folks who departed with the Israelites.<sup>124</sup> God seeks to reconcile the world through Kingdom disciples, and it is connected to the Kingdom's agenda because He is creating one new humanity. The diverse gathering of Black and Brown bodies newly liberated from slavery in Egypt is directly connected to God's promise to Abraham that he would make him the father of many nations.<sup>125</sup> Therefore, human depravity must never be a reason to settle for accepting intergenerational trauma because of the promises made to us through Christ. Although trauma is not something individuals can always control, there are ways to ensure that the adverse effects are minimized, if not avoided altogether, by considering Paul's plea to the Church in Ephesus to become one in Christ Jesus.

Kingdom concerns must be Christian concerns which are human life and dignity. Christians must avoid bypassing hard conversations concerning race, trauma, and practices that sidestep personal and emotional experiences through avoidance and repression for this hope to

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122. Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart*, 37.

123. McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as An Exercise in Hope*, 110.

124. Gen 29:26-30. McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as An Exercise in Hope*, 110. Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, NAC (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 303-304.

125. McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as An Exercise in Hope*, 110.

be accomplished.<sup>126</sup> “Spiritual bypassing” is often disguised as colorblind rhetoric that seeks to avoid conversations of ethnic differences to eliminate cognitive dissonance. This is precisely why the discussion about humanity being created in the image and likeness of God is essential because when you deny an individual’s ethnicity, you unintentionally deny the ethnic attributes of God displayed through various ethnic groups. Color blindness serves as a scheme of Satan to alienate, denigrate, and convince Christians that ethnicity is not essential or a priority to God. God’s vision for Christians is not to dismiss ethnic diversity by seeking uniformity, color blindness, and assimilation. Instead, it is for humanity to flourish in the promise made with Abraham that is made possible through the manifestation of God’s grace through Christ.

When Christians spiritually bypass ethnicity, they miss out on the fullest expression of God to the world through His ethnically diverse creation. The celebration and inclusion of ethnic diversity are essential to the narrative of Scripture and have eschatological implications that must be considered. These implications began with God creating humanity in His image and likeness and became explicitly clear through promises made with Abraham and the Davidic reign of Christ. Despite the fall of humanity, the tower of Babel, and the separation of people groups, God promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations. This encompassed God’s eschatological vision of Reconciliation, which was ultimately fulfilled through Christ. The Abrahamic promise of universal blessing serves as the theological foundation for Isaiah 2:1-5, when God would establish universal peace on the last day.<sup>127</sup> Through Christ, God’s eschatological vision for oneness, diversity, and Reconciliation is accomplished when humanity

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126. Diana Raab, *What Is Spiritual Bypassing?* (Psychology Today, 2019), <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-empowerment-diary/201901/what-is-spiritual-bypassing>.

127. McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope*, 91-100.

embodies the fullness of who they are and how they were created. Given the strong link between the story of Abraham and ethnic diversity, the connection between the Abrahamic promises and the Davidic promises takes on special significance because of Christ, who comes from the lineage of David.

Given that the future Davidic kingdom is depicted as just and multi-ethnic, it is essential to remember the emphasis on Jesus' Davidic and Abrahamic sonship throughout the New Testament.<sup>128</sup> Moreover, it is vital to understand the importance of Biblical justice, God's agenda, diverse disciples, and reconciliation. Christians are not called to colorblindness because it is subversive to the mission of Reconciliation and falls short of the glory of God when individuals are forced to assimilate and compromise who they are.<sup>129</sup> Christians will never fully understand or grasp the vision of the Kingdom of God without all ethnic groups worshiping under the reign of Jesus. This form of worship plays a critical role in the Church. If leaders desire to embrace the challenges of reflecting God's Kingdom on earth as it is in Heaven, consider what it means to be a member of the Church, the body of Christ. Finally, wrestling with God's Kingdom, Mujerista Theology, and how evangelical organizations can respond to the needs of the oppressed creates an opportunity for leaders to explore solidarity. Reconciliation and solidarity create a way for leaders to overcome the obstacles and impact of intergenerational trauma.

The hope is for leaders to consider history, the tensions, challenges, implications of intergenerational trauma, and the complex nature of this chapter as we seek to move forward in our discussion about Black and White leaders working together within predominantly White

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128. McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope*, 114.

129. McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope*, 100-116.

organizations. Eschatology and its implications address the tensions of living out God's mission, considering human depravity, while pursuing a redemptive hope in Christ's return. However, the next portion of this chapter will address God's image and likeness, historical beliefs, and current implications for Christians. Generally, historical views have led to intergenerational trauma and continue to impact how Christians understand humanity's role. Understanding humans being created in God's Image is broad and nuanced, and there is a wide range of perspectives. To further understand intergenerational trauma, we will examine historical perspectives that have shaped American Christianity.

### **The Doctrine of Humanity: Image of God**

The doctrine of humanity has a variety of perspectives, but questions worth considering are: what does it mean to be a child of God who is created in God's image? What are historical perspectives concerning the image and likeness of God? It becomes difficult for leaders to understand intergenerational trauma's impact if there are varying opinions and views surrounding humanity's reflection of God's image and likeness. Concerning *selem* and *dāmūt*, one primary concern is understanding what to make of our sinful nature and how that impacts Christian embodiment and practice. Genesis 2 is God establishing His ultimate purpose in Christ coming to earth and revealing God's kingdom to humanity's *selem* and *dāmūt*.

Humanity was created to flourish and embody Christ. Embodying Christ requires Christians to be in tune with the Holy Spirit. Embodiment needs them to also be in tune with themselves emotionally, spiritually, physically, and mentally. These cannot function with each other. This section will explore humanity's unique capacity to relate to God, historical perspectives of being created in *selem* and *dāmūt*, and its impact on human interactions and views. God put an incarnation of Himself into the earth through Christ, so creation can

appropriately worship Him through His image, power, love, grace, and sovereignty. If humans are created in God's image and likeness, which is diverse, then His Church should reflect the diverse world He created. There are unique differences in how Black and White Christians historically understand humanity being created in God's image. This is evident when considering the failed attempts of racial Reconciliation and ongoing racial tensions within Christianity and America that will be examined in chapter three. However, the more leaders examine historical perspectives and how they have impacted Black and White Christians, it becomes clear why racial Reconciliation and division persist today within Christianity. This next section will examine various historical perspectives that have generally influenced Christianity.

It is essential to consider a brief and selective history to unravel how these have influenced evangelical orthodoxy and orthopraxy. This section will highlight four different perspectives: Humanity's Mental and or Spiritual Resemblance to God, Humanity's Physical Resemblance to God's Corporeal Form, Humans as God's Counterpart, and Humans as God's Royal Representatives on Earth. We will examine these various perspectives by evaluating Dr. Catherine McDowell's book, *The Image of God in the Garden of Eden*. This portion of the book will not capture the entire argument McDowell presents. However, partnered with historical sources, McDowell's work can help leaders understand the complexities and historical implications of humans being created in God's image.

### **Humans Resemble God in Their Mental and Spiritual Capacity**

The first perspective focuses on humanity's ability to resemble God mentally and spiritually. Philo was the first person who developed the notion that image and likeness could not represent man's physical body because God does not have a human form. And, the human form

is not a representation of godlikeness.<sup>130</sup> Augustine believed that human likeness to God was merely a reflection of the human mind, understanding, free will, and ability to know and love God.<sup>131</sup> Pioneer of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther claimed, “When Moses says that man was also created in the similitude of God, he indicates that man is not only like God in this respect that he can reason, or intellect, and a will, but also that he has a likeness of God, that is, a will and intellect by which he understands God and by which he desires what God desires.”<sup>132</sup> For many scholars, image and likeness can only be understood intellectually and through the human ability to reason and comprehend religious truth.<sup>133</sup>

### **Humans Resemble God in Their Corporeal Form**

The second perspective addresses how humans resemble God in their corporeal or physical form. This idea is steeped in Rabbinic theology, and the scholar who pioneered this idea was Arthur Marmorstein. Marmorstein’s understanding of the corporeal form of humanity comes from the school of Rabbi Akiva and their literal reading of the text with the development of an anthropomorphic knowledge of God.<sup>134</sup> Other scholars that influenced this ideology were H. Gunkel, T. Nöldeke, B. Duhm, and J. Skinner. Nöldeke related Hebrew *selem* to Arabic *Salama*, which translates “to cut off” or “pluck out,” and concluded that *selem* refers to a physical

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130. McDowell, *The Image of God in the Garden of Eden: The Creation of Humankind in Genesis 2:5-3:24 in Light of the mīs pî, pīt pî and wpt-r Rituals of Mesopotamia and Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures* (Eisenbrauns, 2015), 118-124. See Jonsson, *The Image of God*, 1-11.

131. McDowell, *The Image of God in the Garden of Eden*, 118-188.

132. Nathan Jastram, *Man as Male and Female: Created in the Image of God* (CBQ 60, 2004), 12-13.

133. S.R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis* (London: Methuen, Kessinger Publishing, LLC, 1907), 32.

134. Arthur Marmorstein, *Essays in Anthropomorphism*, vol. 2: *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God* (New York, NY: Ktav, 1968), 1-57, also see pages 9, 32-35, 37, 56, 71. One the body of God.

representation, as in Genesis 5:3. That meaning is consistent with Genesis 1:27.<sup>135</sup> Gunkel also based his understanding of *selem* and *dāmūt* in Genesis 1:26-27 on the parallel in Genesis 5:1-3 by stating: “God created Adam in his image; Adam begat Seth in his image. McDowell states that the second statement is unequivocal: the son looks like the father; he resembles him in form and appearance—The first statement is to be interpreted accordingly: the first human resembles God in form and appearance.”<sup>136</sup> Gunkel and Duhm’s perspective influenced P. Humbert, whose article in 1940 on the *Imago Dei* brought attention to the idea that man bore a physical likeness to God.<sup>137</sup> He concluded that human likeness to God does not lie in intellectual, moral, or spiritual abilities but rather in physical resemblance.<sup>138</sup> This perspective is helpful and has been presented by Black leaders for centuries, as they witnessed and experienced racism and White supremacy. The third perspective addresses humans as God’s counterparts. This perspective and how humans resemble God in their mental and spiritual capacity is beneficial when understanding evangelical theology.

### **Humans as God’s Counterpart**

Karl Barth interpreted image and likeness to mean that man alone, among all the creatures, was created for a unique relationship with God.<sup>139</sup> In other words, people have the freedom to act and respond to God, which distinguishes humans from animals. According to Barth, an advantage of this perspective is humanity’s ability to enter into a covenant relationship

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135. Marmorstein, *Essays in Anthropomorphism*, vol. 2: *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God*, 183-187.

136. McDowell, *The Image of God in the Garden of Eden*, 128. See Gunkel, *Genesis*, (113).

137. P. Humbert, *Études Sur Le Récit Du Paradis Et De La Chute Dans La Genèse* (Mémoires de l'Université de Neuchâtel 14; Neuchâtel: Secrétariat de L'Université, 1940).

138 Humbert, 157. Gen. 29:26-30

139. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3: *The Doctrine of Creation, Part I* (ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance; Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1958), 182-206.

with God, which is found in the plural, “Let us make” (*na’âseh*), influencing Barth’s interpretation of the plurality of the one God, and humanity is created, male and female.<sup>140</sup> Barth concludes, “The point of the text is that God willed to create man as a being corresponding to His own being— in such a way that He (even if in His knowledge of Himself) is the original and prototype, and man the copy and imitation.”<sup>141</sup> This idea of humans being God’s counterpart was also expressed by T.C. Vriezen, who concluded that the special relationship between God and humans qualifies humans as God’s image.<sup>142</sup> He also claimed that humankind has a direct and personal relationship with God and that this relationship is defined as one of a son to his father.<sup>143</sup> This perspective is rooted in humans having the ability to have a divine relationship with God, which leads humans to be God’s counterparts. This theory interprets the terms *selem* and *dāmût* far too narrowly, limiting the correspondence to physical resemblance, and does not include functional similarity which *selem* and *dāmût* imply; however, it has undoubtedly shaped Evangelicalism.<sup>144</sup>

### **Humans as God’s Royal Representatives on Earth**

The idea of humans serving as God’s royal representatives on earth was trailblazed by J. Hehn. Hehn connected and interpreted *selem* and *dāmût* with significant consideration of Babylonian and Egyptian parallels.<sup>145</sup> Historically, kings and emperors were referred to as God's

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140. McDowell, *The Image of God in the Garden of Eden*, 128-129.

141. Barth, 182-206. See also Jónsson, *The Image of God*, 72-73.

142. McDowell, *The Image of God in the Garden of Eden*, 128-129.

143. Vriezen, *La création de l’homme d’après L’image de Dieu, Ou Testamenti Sche Studien 2* (1943), 87-105.

144. McDowell, *The Image of God in the Garden of Eden*, 121-130.

145. J. Hehn, *Zum Terminus ‘Bild Gottes*, in *Festschrift Eduard Sachau zum siebzigsten Geburtstage* (Berlin: Reimer, 1915), 36-52.



image, leading Hehn to conclude that image and likeness are royal designations for humanity.<sup>146</sup>

This perspective led other scholars to understand *selem* and *dāmūt* through the broader Near Eastern royal traditions, mainly from Egypt.<sup>147</sup> When diving deeper into the Near Eastern perspective, the role of kings and those in power are instrumental. Thus, the influence of humans serves as God's royal representation on earth, with its origins originating in Mesopotamian and supported by Egyptian royal ideology.<sup>148</sup>

### **The Curse of Ham**

Considering this history, it is worth diving into how these perspectives impacted Black and White leaders. One perspective that has historically influenced and shaped how Black people are viewed is the curse of Ham.<sup>149</sup> In Genesis 9, God makes a covenant with Noah by saying that his family should be fruitful and increase in number, filling the earth. God grants Noah dominion and power over everything on the earth, like Adam and Eve in Genesis 1-2. In verse 6, God says to Noah, "Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for God's image has God made mankind."<sup>150</sup> God never granted Noah dominion and power over humans, just creatures, livestock, wild animals, and everything on Noah's ark. God promised Noah never to destroy the earth again, and His covenant was for all generations to come. Noah proceeded to get drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked and told

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146. McDowell, *The Image of God in the Garden of Eden*, 122-130.

147. Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary Old Testament Library* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1973), 42-58.

148. H. Wildberger, *Das Abbild Gottes, Gen 1, 26-30, TZ 21* (1965): 245-501; W.H. Schmidt, *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte der Priesterschrift and The Faith of the Old Testament: A History* (trans. John Sturdy; Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1983), 195-98.

149. Gen 9:21-27.

150. Gen 9:6.

his two brothers outside, they walked in backward, and they covered Noah while hiding their faces from his nakedness.<sup>151</sup> Noah woke up and was told what Ham did, and he said, “Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers. Praise be to the Lord, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem. May God extend Japheth’s territory; may Japheth live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be the slave of Japheth.”<sup>152</sup> Despite not being described in racial terms, for centuries variously interpreted by Islamic, Christian, and Jewish scholars, Ham came to be widely portrayed as Black; Blackness and servitude and the idea of racial hierarchy became inextricably linked.<sup>153</sup> Historian David M. Goldenberg spent 13 years investigating Blacks in Jewish literature and found that a misreading of Hebrew and other Semitic languages led to the mistaken belief that the word “Ham” meant “dark, Black, or heat.” Despite zealous Christians who fought in the Abolition movement to get rid of slavery, many scholars, theologians, and seminary professors continued to use Genesis 9:20-27 to justify Jim Crow laws, segregation, membership in the Ku Klux Klan, and the general mistreatment of Black people.<sup>154</sup>

Scholar Carl Ellis believes the curse of Ham stems from a bizarre mythological explanation of the origin of the White race was in part a reaction to White Christianity’s bizarre myths about the mark of Cain and the curse of Ham.<sup>155</sup> It is believed that Black people are the

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151. Gen 9:20-23.

152. Gen 9:25-27.

153. Felicia R. Lee, *From Noah’s Curse to Slavery’s Rationale*, New York, NY: The New York Times, 2003, accessed (June 22, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/01/arts/from-noah-s-curse-to-slavery-s-rationale.html>.

154. Gregg Hunter, *The Curse of Ham Genesis: 9:24-27*, Fort Howard: MD, Fort Howards Community Church, 2020, accessed (June 22, 2021), <https://www.forthowardcc.com/blog/post/the-curse-of-ham--genesis-924-27>.

155. Carl F. Ellis, *Free At Last: The Gospel in the African American Experience* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 119-20.

cursed descendants of Ham and inherited his curse of perpetual bondage and more explicitly implying that Black people do not have souls. The Curse of Ham ideology influenced Western Christianity and was used as justification for slavery, Jim Crow, and segregation. According to Stephen R. Haynes, “Scholars of history and religion alike have failed to comprehend that pro-slavery Southerners were drawn to Genesis 9:20-27 because it resonated with their deepest cultural values.”<sup>156</sup> The curse of Ham coincided with political climates that have led to years of oppression, violence, and the mistreatment of Black people. Thus, the impact of intergenerational trauma and how Christians view and treat one another. Considering the historical oppression of Jews pre and post Reformation, it is evident that if Christians could justify anti-Semitism, they could justify Black inferiority, slavery, racism, and White supremacy. Ultimately, what Genesis 9:20-27 means is that there is no curse on Ham. The curse fell upon Canaan, and the Canaanites, who were not defined as Black, and yet, the Canaanites populated the Promised Land. Eventually, the curse was fulfilled when the Israelites conquered Canaan (*see Joshua 1-12*).<sup>157</sup> This information is worth a more exhaustive review, but let us examine a few denominations, scholars, and influencers of the Christian faith to see how the Enlightenment and the curse of Ham shaped their view of Black people.

### **George Whitefield**

George Whitefield is known as one of the most influential pastors who came from England to evangelize and preach the gospel. Compared to most of his White contemporaries, Whitefield was more moderate on race but excoriated enslavers for their physical abuse of

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156. Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (New York, NY: Oxford Press, 2007), 112-257.

157. Hunter, *The Curse of Ham Genesis: 9:24-27*.

slaves, calling them “monsters of barbarity.”<sup>158</sup> He was somewhat ambivalent about the practice of slavery itself and concerned about enslavers not allowing the enslaved to be evangelized. However, when Whitefield began planning what would become the Bethesda Orphanage and needed to finance the nonprofit, Whitefield turned to slavery to fund his orphanage. He believed that allowing slavery could improve the financial fortunes of the land in Georgia and claimed that economic ruin was the only alternative.<sup>159</sup> Whitefield explicitly states: “Georgia can never be a flourishing province unless negroes are employed as slaves.”<sup>160</sup> Whitefield’s perspective on slavery changed because he saw the economic benefits, but unfortunately, the impulse for slavery could not be separated from the racist ideas that typecast enslaved Africans.<sup>161</sup> In addition, George Whitefield was not the only prominent evangelical figure to support slavery.

### **Jonathan Edwards**

According to Richard Anderson, Jonathan Edwards was a Calvinist theologian. He stressed the total sovereignty of God and the urgent need for all people to gain salvation and thus avoid eternal damnation.<sup>162</sup> Like other leading evangelists of the Great Awakening, he stressed a personal and experiential Christianity that led followers to more profound religious devotion and moral reform.<sup>163</sup> Edwards also enslaved human beings despite opposing the African slave trade

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158. Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church’s Complicity in Racism*, 61.

159. Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church’s Complicity in Racism*, 51-63

160. Thomas Kidd, *George Whitefield: America’s Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 188-209.

161. Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church’s Complicity in Racism*, 42-62.

162. Richard Anderson, *Princeton & Slavery: Jonathan Edwards Sr.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, November 24, 2018, Accessed (December 21, 2021), <https://postbarthian.com/2018/11/24/jonathan-edwards-a-slave-owner-who-purchased-slaves-and-defended-slavery/>. George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (Yale Publishers, 2003), 257.

163. Anderson. Marsden, 255-257.

for evangelistic reasons. Edwards never rejected the idea of slavery if enslavers treated their enslaved persons with dignity, based on slavery's tacit acceptance in the Bible.<sup>164</sup> Edwards undeniably supported slavery because it directly connected to his elite status in the New England society and appeased the wealthy and influential people within his congregation.<sup>165</sup>

In 1741, there was a conflict over slavery in a congregation near Northampton. It was brought before a local council of ministers, including Edwards.<sup>166</sup> The clerical body tasked Edwards with drafting a response to the arguments of church members who denounced their minister for owning a slave. In his response, Edwards defended the authority of his fellow cleric and accused his congregants of hypocrisy. Edwards argued The critics were not “immediate partakers” of the fruits of slavery. Still, like most New Englanders, “they may have their slaves at next step”—meaning the critics indirectly benefited from the institution of slavery.<sup>167</sup> Richard Anderson highlights that Edwards acknowledged that God had permitted the Israelites to capture and enslave the Canaanites but argued that this represented only one specific instance. Edwards contended that Christians could not transform a “special” dispensation into an “Established Rule.”<sup>168</sup> The document more generally reveals Edwards' belief in Europeans and Africans' spiritual—but not earthly—equality, an attitude reflected in his efforts to convert the enslaved to Christians.<sup>169</sup> Edwards believed, “Christ condescends to take notice of servants & people of all

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164. Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism*, 66.

165. Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism*, 66-79.

166. Anderson, Richard *Princeton & Slavery: Jonathan Edwards Sr.*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University).

167. Kenneth P. Minkema, *Jonathan Edwards on Slavery and the Slave Trade*, (Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, The William and Mary Quarterly, 1997), 796-826, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2953884?origin=crossref&seq=1>.

168. Minkema, 825-826.

169. George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2004), 258.

nations and condescends to poor negroes.”<sup>170</sup> Edwards acted on that principle in his ministerial role by admitting nine Africans to the Northampton congregation as full congregants, including an enslaved woman Leah. The church also welcomed Native American members.<sup>171</sup>

### **Cotton Mather**

In 1706, Cotton Mather’s pamphlet, “*The Negro Christianized*,” called the idea of Blacks lacking souls a “*British insinuation*,” which implied that God’s saints could be found amongst all peoples.<sup>172</sup> Like most other Christians of his time, Mather believed that racial equality before God did not demand equality on earth, and it was compatible with the institution of slavery.<sup>173</sup> To better understand who Mather was and his perspective on Black people and slavery, consider these words from his pamphlet:

The state of your negroes in this world must be low, and mean, and abject, a state of servitude..... In the meantime, ‘tis a most horrid and cursed condition, wherein your servants are languishing, until Christianity has made saving impressions upon them..... And all of them are more slaves to Satan than they are to you, until a faith in the Son of God has made them free indeed. Will you do nothing to pluck them out of the jaws of Satan, the devourer? Especially since you may justly imagine them crying to you, in terms like those of the child whom a lion was running away with. Help! Hel! I am yet alive! O souls deaf to the cry of souls, pitty, pitty the souls of your Negroes, which cry unto you, have pity on us, O our asters, have pity on us, whom the holy God has justly delivered over into woeful slavery to the powers of darkness: And, Oh! Do something, that the light of salvation by the glorious Lord Jesus Christ may arrive unto us. A soul, ignorant of God and His Christ, and vicious in all the affections of it, and that neither knows nor likes the things that are holy and just and good, and that has no illuminations from Heaven ever visiting of it but is in great folly wandering down to the congregation of the dead; Such a soul is a terrible sight!<sup>174</sup>

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170. Minkema, 780-826.

171. Marsden, 167-258.

172. Mark S. Weiner, *The Miserable African: Race, Crime, and Disease in Colonial Boston* (Common Place, 2004), <http://commonplace.online/article/this-miserable-african-race-crime-and-disease-in-colonial-boston/>.

173. Weiner, *The Miserable African: Race, Crime, and Disease in Colonial Boston*.

174. Cotton Mather, *The Negro Christianized: An Essay to Excite and Assist that Good Work, The Instruction of Negro-Servants in Christianity* (Boston, MA: Second North Church, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1706), 9-10.

The fact is that many religious and political leaders used the curse of Ham as moral reasoning to justify the institution of slavery and the mistreatment of Black people. This treatment of a fellow human being as property devalues the intrinsic worth of the *imago dei*.<sup>175</sup> Mather, Edwards, and Whitefield were complicit when it came to slavery. This demonstrates a poor exegesis of Scripture that seeks to liberate God's people from slavery within its ethos and foreigners like Gentiles. God uses Scripture to reform how slavery is modeled in the world, thus the year of Jubilee, granting freedom after seven years for Jewish slaves and emphasizing how the enslaved is to be treated. Moreover, slavery for various people groups differed for Black enslaved because they were the only enslaved people who could not purchase or work for their freedoms after a while. This understanding of slavery and these individuals' impact continued to influence various scholars and denominations for centuries.

### **The Southern Baptist Convention**

Many churches in the Southern Baptist Convention once openly endorsed the false teaching of the so-called “curse of Ham” narrative. This teaching errantly construed Genesis 9:25-27 to say that God ordained the descendants of Ham to be marked with dark skin and be relegated to a subordinated status based on race.<sup>176</sup> This argument for justifying racist ideology contradicts the rest of Scripture, especially those passages that teach the image of God in every person regardless of gender or ethnicity (Genesis 1:26–27; Acts 17:26), the unity of people purchased by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:11–22), and the certainty that Jesus' bride is a

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175. Jason Meyer, *Jonathan Edwards, and His Support of Slavery: A Lament* (The Gospel Coalition, 2019) <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/jonathan-edwards-support-slavery-lament/>.

176. *On Renouncing the Doctrine of the “Curse of Ham” As A Justification for Racism*, Southern Baptist Convention, 2018, accessed (March 23, 2022), <https://www.sbc.net/resource-library/resolutions/on-renouncing-the-doctrine-of-the-curse-of-ham-as-a-justification-for-racism/>.

multi-ethnic people (Rev 7:9).<sup>177</sup> We will discuss the Southern Baptist Convention in greater detail in chapter three.

### **James Cone & Tom Skinner**

James Cone writes about the suffering of Black people during the lynching era and how the silence and oppression of White supremacy took different forms and employed various means to achieve the same end: the subjugation of Black people.<sup>178</sup> Finally, Tom Skinner addresses how relevant the message of Jesus Christ is to the reality and condition of Black people in America. Skinner provides insight and describes four significant crises that Black people face when seeking the liberation of their humanity through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The first is the crisis of the Black man's past: whether he can overcome the years of slavery, years of subjection to fourth-class citizenship and disenfranchisement, and the rage within him due to his past. Second is the crisis of the Black man's identity: his struggle to discover himself, who he is, what he is here for, and where he is going. The third is the community crisis, both the Black man's relationship with his Black brother and his relationship with his White brother: whether or not the Black community can survive, and more, provide leadership in American society. And fourth is the power crisis: having discovered his past and learned how to overcome it, having discovered who he is and who his neighbor is and how he ought to relate to him, the Black man must find the power to pull it off. But unfortunately, he faces the same problem his White brother faces at this point. The White brother has had no difficulty discovering his past and overcoming it; he has had no problem discovering who he is. He knows what his responsibility ought to be toward his neighbor –but he has never had the power to pull it off.<sup>179</sup>

Considering the words of Cone and Skinner gives relevant insight into realities that many Black leaders experience when working for predominantly White organizations and their humanity and identity. Skinner believed that the purpose of humans created in the image of God was for the

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177. *On Renouncing the Doctrine of the "Curse of Ham" As A Justification for Racism*.

178. James Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 2-9.

179. Tom Skinner, *How Black Is the Gospel: A Decisive and Truthful Message for Today's Revolution* (Skinner Leadership Institute, 2016), 211-345 (Kindle Edition).



invisible God to mirror Himself in humanity. By taking the clay of humanity, breathing His own life through humanity, humanity is put on display for the world to witness an invisible God who is alive through the humanity of mankind.<sup>180</sup> This perspective is helpful as leaders wrestle down the purpose of humanity and how God expects humanity to be governed. Understanding that Genesis 1:26 is before the rebellion of Adam and Eve, this perspective is foundationally helpful for Christians seeking to understand their purpose in the earth better. If we consider Skinner's perspective, it provides a generalization of the Black American experience. In addition, consider the words of Benjamin Franklin. In an essay published by Franklin in 1762 but written years earlier, the Quaker John Woolman contemptuously dismissed the Curse of Ham argument by stating:<sup>181</sup>

To suppose it right that an innocent man shall at this day be excluded from the common rules of justice; be deprived of that liberty which is the natural right of human creatures, and be a slave to others during life on account of a sin committed by his immediate parents; or a sin committed by Ham, the Son of Noah, is a supposition too gross to be admitted into the mind of any person, who sincerely desires to be governed by solid principles.<sup>182</sup>

Justifying slavery, truncating the holistic nature of the Bible and what it states concerning the imago dei, has led to intergenerational trauma. Leaders must wrestle with their understanding of the image of God amidst the racial unrest that has historically plagued America. Evangelicals should consider how they have been influenced and informed by the teachings of Luther, Calvin, Whitefield, Edwards, and others. Leaders who work in predominantly White evangelical

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180. Skinner, 276-359 (Kindle Edition).

181. David M. Goldenberg, *Black and Slave: The Origins and History of the Curse of Ham*, (De Gruyter, Inc., 2017), 148. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=4866632>.

182. John Woolman, *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes, Part II* (1774) in John Woolman, *The Journal and Essays of John Woolman*, ed. Amelia M. Gummere (New York, NY, 1922), 273-355.

ministries, or have been seminary educated, should consider these scholars' influence, impact, and implications and how it contributes to intergenerational trauma. Despite these scholars writing and teaching doctrine and influencing the Church, their words, actions, and deeds should be addressed and examined by Evangelicalism. I recommend leaders explore various literature that illuminates the racial bias these scholars and preachers held about Black people. It is worth considering their biblical and theological understanding of slavery because it does reveal how these individuals view God and individuals created in His image. Black and White leaders alike have both been impacted by their teachings, and it continues to perpetuate, influence, and impact Evangelicalism.

The division between Evangelicalism and the Black Church stems from the division of the sacred and secular divide that has led to cultural disintegration.<sup>183</sup> The divide is also due to racism, White supremacy, and Christian Nationalism that is fueled by political propaganda and bias. Previously emphasized before, it was never God's intention for humanity to be divided or exist in separate worlds. Nations splitting and being divided was a byproduct of the fall, but through the finished work of Christ, the world is getting reconciled back to God and His Kingdom. Unfortunately, due to humanity's refusal to submit to divine authority and God's Kingdom instituted by Christ, the divide between Evangelicalism and the Black Church could not be more evident after the twentieth century. The refusal to submit to divine authority and God's mission compliments Moses' issues with the Israelites and why their generation never crossed over to the Promised Land. Moreover, this refusal is what Carl Ellis calls "The Battle of the Bible."<sup>184</sup> When describing the rise of Fundamentalism and the Modernists, Ellis writes:

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183. Evans, *Oneness Embraced: Reconciliation, The Kingdom, and How We are Stronger Together*, 223-261.

184. Ellis, *Free At Last: The Gospel in the African American Experience*, 36-70.

On one side were those following in the footsteps of others who a century earlier had given in to the basic assumptions of secular humanism. As a result, their Christianity had eroded into an empty Christianity-ism, with a god whose substance depended on the human definition and human opinion. For them, Jesus was merely a human book containing some passages that might be considered “inspired” in some valuable way. These people became known as “liberals” or “modernists.” On the other side of the battle were those who, reacting against the liberals, advocated personal salvation and orthodox doctrine over social action. They became known as *fundamentalists* or “conservatives.”<sup>185</sup>

Ellis does a great job highlighting how those who stood on the conceptual authority of Scripture took the fundamentalist side. In contrast, those who stood for the moral authority of Scripture took the liberal side.<sup>186</sup> One major theme that continues to drive this divide is that many fundamentalists desire to distinguish themselves from liberals by abandoning all forms of social involvement and focusing their efforts on individual salvation.<sup>187</sup> This exposes the foundational principles of Evangelicalism, rooted in similar ideologies and influence of George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, Cotton Mather, and others.

### **Kinship to Christ**

Social action, racial justice, and human dignity are not liberalism. These actions respond to the call for Christians to care for the oppressed and poor among them. Without a comprehensive understanding of the gospel, Christians will lack the common goal necessary to bring humanity together and evoke real and lasting change in America.<sup>188</sup> There should not be a separation between Scriptural authority and social concerns. Christians are called to conform to the image of Christ, which leads to sanctification and reconciling the Church back to God as one

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185. Ellis, *Free At Last: The Gospel in the African American Experience*, 46-72.

186. Ellis, *Free At Last: The Gospel in the African American Experience*, 62-75.

187. Ellis, *Free At Last: The Gospel in the African American Experience*, 62-80.

188. Evans, *Oneness Embraced: Reconciliation, The Kingdom, and How We are Stronger Together* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2011), 269.

new humanity. In Ephesians 2:11-20, Paul reminds the Gentiles of their days as uncircumcised people, without Christ, hope, and covenantal promises that reconcile them to God. When Paul describes a new man, or humanity, being reconciled back to God, he does not imply this in an ethnic sense. It is implied covenantal because of the new covenant Christ instituted.<sup>189</sup> The new covenant, and Paul's implications, make it clear that new humanity is first about covenantal unity, making ethnic unity a byproduct.

The image of God reminds us of God as a royal ruler who gave the world His Son to provide an opportunity for humanity to be in a right relationship with Him. This speaks directly to the call in 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 for people to be reconnected, or reconciled, to God and their fellow humans. The key idea for 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 is reconciliation and kinship to Christ because of humanity's rebellion. Reconcile means to change thoroughly, referring to a changed relationship between God and the lost world.<sup>190</sup> Reconciliation was and is the mission of Christ for the lost world. Christians are called to reflect and model Christ, who modeled His Father in heaven.<sup>191</sup> Biblical oneness is not the only goal God has for His people. For Christians, Biblical oneness is found by understanding God's demonstration of reconciliation through Christ as the ultimate blood sacrifice so that humanity experiences God's Kingdom.

In Genesis 9:6, the use of blood is fulfilled through Christ for the sake of humanity's image and likeness being redeemed because of His finished work on the cross. Christ is the male blood relative responsible for defending and maintaining the welfare and rights of humanity. It is important to remember that *Gā'al* means to redeem or act as a kinsman, revealed through Christ.

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189. See Jer 31:31-34, Luke 22:20, Mark 14:24, Rom 8:1-39, Heb 8:6-13; 9:15, 1 Cor 11:25.

190. Warren W. Wiersebe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament, vol. 1, Matthew-Galatians* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008), 640-649.

191. John 15-17.

This is the only way Christians can worship God appropriately, empowered and motivated by love, redemption, and reconciliation to God, to redeem *selem* and *dāmūt* that has been distorted and tainted by slavery, racism, and White supremacy. Christians are sons and daughters who have been saved, and leaders must examine their understanding of this reality. Suppose leaders do not have a genuine and biblically sound understanding of the Church's role and humans created in God's image. In that case, their knowledge of the Kingdom of God will be distorted, in addition to their Christian witness, which impacts Black leaders working within majority White organizations. History clarifies the tensions we faced today in America, particularly in the American church. History gives context to the trauma Christianity has caused by justifying acts of slavery, anti-Semitism, sexism, racism, White supremacy, etc. If evangelicals are committed to sound biblical interpretation and accurate exegesis of Scripture, understand that until you uproot racism, Christian nationalism, and White supremacy out of theology and organizations, achieving racial reconciliation and diversity will be challenging to accomplish authentically. Moreover, intergenerational trauma will continue to manifest for leaders and significantly impact Black leaders within the organization.

Suppose Christians are called to reflect Christ and represent God's Kingdom on earth. In that case, the historical impact of God's Kingdom must be addressed and corrected within evangelical theology, discipleship, and church formation. There needs to be a critique of the Church's role in racism and White supremacy. Evangelicalism is committed to sound biblical interpretation and accurate exegesis of Scripture. What steps are being taken to uproot racism and White supremacy from their theology, biblical interpretation, and organizations? How will God's Kingdom, racial reconciliation, unity, and diversity be accomplished if racism, White

supremacy, and racial justice continue to be a point of tension and divide within the Church?<sup>192</sup> True diversity and reconciliation are rooted in our kinship to Christ and one another. Christians are called to celebrate individuals fully living out God's *selem* and *dāmūt*, not merely acculturating or assimilating to the majority cultures' preferences. True diversity and reconciliation happen when the Church reflects God's Kingdom, but what is the definition, role, and purpose of the Church in resolving these tensions? When discussing the Church's role, the place to begin understanding intergenerational trauma is by understanding how God desires to use His Church. How does God want the Church to reflect His image and likeness through diversity and build His Kingdom on earth?

### **The Church's Role**

How Christians describe the Church is critical for establishing its role on the earth. The Greek word for Church is *ekklesia*, which means God's the assembly or community of God's people, centered on Christ.<sup>193</sup> The *ekklesia* represents the new humanity that would replace Israel as God's instrument to the world and offer God's Kingdom to the earth.<sup>194</sup> The Church was "born" on Pentecost when the Holy Spirit filled the upper room, and people were baptized, thus giving birth to the Church.<sup>195</sup> Paul clarifies the Church's role and sees the Holy Spirit's work as essential to its ministry. "The same Spirit is at work in all these things, distributing to each person as he chooses. For just as the body is one but has many parts; and all the parts of the

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192. Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Race* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2018), 35-77.

193. Walter Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2017), 181-183.

194. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God*, 65-112.

195. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God*, 65-112.

body, though many, constitute one body; so it is with the Messiah. For it was by one Spirit that we were all immersed into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, slaves or free; and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”<sup>196</sup> The Church reflects the Kingdom of God by putting God’s love on display to the world. How does the Church’s role influence our perspectives and how Christian organizations function considering God’s Kingdom? Does Evangelicalism understand that the Church is not the Kingdom of God? When addressing the Church’s responsibility and role in God’s Kingdom, George Ladd suggests the following:

First, the New Testament does not equate believers with the Kingdom. The first missionaries preached the Kingdom of God, not the Church (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31). It is impossible to substitute “Church” for “Kingdom” in such sayings. The only references to the people as *basileia* are Revelation 1:6 and 5:10, but the people are so designated not because they are the subjects of God’s reign but because they will share Christ’s reign. In these sayings, “Kingdom” is synonymous with “kings,” not with the people over whom God rules. None of the sayings in the Gospels equates Jesus’ disciples with the Kingdom. Such identification has often been seen in the parable of the tares; and indeed, the statement that the Son of Man will gather all causes of sin “out of the Kingdom” before the coming of the Kingdom of the Father seems to suggest that the Church is equated with the Kingdom of Christ (Mt. 13:41, 43). However, the parable itself expressly identifies the field as the world, not as the Church in verse 38.<sup>197</sup>

Christians can easily overlook this parable and what Jesus is communicating about His Kingdom and the Church. It addresses the Church’s nature but teaches how God’s Kingdom invades history without disrupting society’s present structure.<sup>198</sup> The apocalyptic and mysterious realities of God’s Kingdom are pertinent to the message Christ preached. In addition, Jesus reminds His disciples, “if you love me, keep my commands, and I will ask the Father, and he will give you

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196. 1 Cor 12:11-13.

197. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God*, 55-112.

198. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God*, 56-112.

199. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God*, 56-112.

another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him because it neither sees nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be with you.”<sup>199</sup> Despite God’s Kingdom not being fully here, Christians have the mandate to operate as if it is here because when Jesus left, He sent the promised Holy Spirit to guide and comfort us as the Church seeks to reflect His Kingdom.

God's apocalyptic and mystical nature reflects Christian leaders’ understanding and dependency on the Holy Spirit. The role as Kingdom disciples is divinely and intuitively connected to the Holy Spirit's empowerment. It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that Black and White leaders can move forward in understanding the role of the Church and how to address intergenerational trauma. The Church’s ultimate function is to reflect a multiethnic narrative instrumental to the Bible and ultimately reflect what is to come when Christ returns for the Kingdom of God's final institution on earth.<sup>200</sup> One idea that impacts the Church in living out its mission to the world is understanding its purpose through Christ. There are various beliefs concerning the Church replacing Israel found in Supersessionism or Replacement Theology. Supersessionism is a complex and severe argument that has divided the Church and kept it from being unified concerning these objectives.

### **Supersessionism Theology**

Scholars use various terms to describe supersessionism— replacement theology and fulfillment theology. Dating back to the second century AD, supersessionism has been the consensus within Christianity, significantly influenced and expanded by Constantine, Justin Martyr, Origen, Tertullian, Augustine, Martin Luther, and John Calvin.<sup>201</sup> When defining

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200. John 14:15-17.

201. Thomas D. Ice, *What is Replacement Theology?* (Liberty University, 2009).



supersessionism, Walter Kaiser believes that the Church, or Abraham's spiritual seed, replaced national Israel. It transcends and fulfills the covenant terms given to Israel, which they lost because of disobedience.<sup>202</sup> Ronald Diprose describes supersessionism as the view that the Church entirely and permanently replaced ethnic Israel in the working out of God's plan. The Church is the recipient of the Old Testament promises to Israel.<sup>203</sup> According to Thomas Soulen, "God chose the Jewish people after the fall of Adam to prepare the world for the coming of Jesus Christ, the Savior. However, after Christ came, the Jewish people's special role ended, and the Church, the new Israel, took its place."<sup>204</sup> Herman Ridderbos believes there are positives and negatives concerning the supersessionism view: "On the one hand, in a positive sense it presupposes that the Church springs from, is born out of Israel; on the other hand, the church takes the place of Israel as the historical people of God."<sup>205</sup> Despite the developing early Church wrestling with supersessionism in the second century, particularly Justin Martyr, an early Church father, first identified the Church as the true spiritual Israel.<sup>206</sup>

The following are widespread beliefs concerning the Church replacing Israel: 1) In 70 AD, Jerusalem was destroyed, 2) God abandoned Israel because of their sin and disobedience,

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202. Walter C. Kaiser, *An Assessment of Replacement Theology: The Relationship Between the Israel of the Abrahamic-Davidic Covenant and the Christians Church*, 10-56.

203. Ronald Diprose, *Israel in the Development of Christians Thought*, 1-5. Walter C. Kaiser, *An Assessment of Replacement Theology: The Relationship Between the Israel of the Abrahamic-Davidic Covenant and the Christians Church*, 2-10

204. Diprose, *Israel in the Development of Christians Thought*, 1-5.

205. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho 11* (ANF, 1:200).

206. Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: WM.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 333-334.

207. Mervin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 79.

and 3) they are no longer the recipients of God's promises and rejected because they crucified Jesus.<sup>207</sup> Some believe that supersessionism arose in the fourth century when the Church began to adopt an anti-Jewish stance that had an enormous effect on its theological constructions and the council of Nicaea.<sup>208</sup> The implications of supersessionism impacted Judaism as the movement shifted from a Jewish to a Gentile Church. "After the apostles died, the next generation of leaders was mostly gentile, especially in the great centers of Christian growth, which included Antioch and Rome. The Church began as an all-Jewish sect, but by the early part of the second century, its adherents— especially in the Diaspora— non-Jews were the dominant representation."<sup>209</sup>

When attempting to define the Church's role, it is undeniable that supersessionism supports the idea that the Christian Church is the new or true Israel that has permanently replaced or superseded Israel as the people of God.<sup>210</sup> Having racialized Jews as a people of the Orient and Judaism as a “religion” of the East, Jews are deemed inferior to Occident Christians or the West.<sup>211</sup> There are two fundamental beliefs of supersessionism: 1) The nation of Israel has somehow forfeited its status as the people of God and will never again possess a unique role or function apart from the church. 2) the church is now the true Israel that has permanently replaced or superseded national Israel as the people of God.<sup>212</sup> Kaiser affirms the falsehood of these claims

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208. Kaiser, *An Assessment of Replacement Theology: The Relationship Between the Israel of the Abrahamic-Davidic Covenant and the Christians Church*, 291-361

209. Wilson, *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christians Faith*, 79.

210. Michael J. Vlach, *The Church as a Replacement of Israel: An Analysis of Supersessionism* (PhD dissertation at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC, 2004), xv (15).

211. J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4, (Kindle Edition).

212. Kaiser, *An Assessment of Replacement Theology: The Relationship Between the Israel of the Abrahamic-Davidic Covenant and the Christians Church*, 42-60.

and gives historical insights into the development of the early Church as he seeks to unpack why he does not affirm supersessionism and the dangers of this theology:

Replacement theology is not a new arrival in the theological arena, for it probably has its origins in an early political-ecclesiastical alliance forged between Eusebius Pamphilius and the Emperor Constantine. Constantine, regarding himself as God's representative in his role as emperor, gathered all the bishops together on the day of his tricennalia (30th anniversary of his reign), an event, incidentally, which he saw as the foreshadowing of the eschatological Messianic banquet. The results of that meeting, in Eusebius' mind, made it unnecessary to distinguish any longer between the Church and the Empire, for they appeared to merge into one fulfilled Kingdom of God on earth in the present time. Such a maneuver, of course, nicely evacuated the role and the significance of the Jewish people in any Kingdom considerations. Here began the long trail of replacement theology.<sup>213</sup>

Supersessionism has impacted and shaped evangelical theology, hermeneutics, discipleship, and organization. There are three different expressions of supersessionism: Punitive

Supersessionism, Economic Supersessionism, and Structural Supersessionism, which are worth further exploration.<sup>214</sup>

Whether it's punitive, economic, structural supersessionism, or anti-Semitism, these ideologies have impacted people for centuries, causing trauma. Ignatius (c. AD 36-108) wrote that Jesus Christ suffered at the hands of the Christ-killing Jews.<sup>215</sup> Gordon Van Wylen states, "As Christians abandoned the mission to their fellow Jews, and proselytized the Gentiles, they shifted blame for the crucifixion of Jesus from the Romans to the Jews — not just some Jews but the Jewish people, collectively. The Jews were branded as deicides — killers of God. This accusation became a deep source of hatred against the Jews."<sup>216</sup> Martin Luther's most emphatic

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213. Kaiser, *An Assessment of Replacement Theology: The Relationship Between the Israel of the Abrahamic-Davidic Covenant and the Christians Church*, 60-71.

214. Appendix H.

215. Melito, *ANF 8:757*. Melito also stated, "God has suffered from the right hand of Israel," (8:760).

216. Ignatius, *Epistle to the Magnesians 11* (ANF 1:64).

statement against the Jews was found in his 1543 track “Concerning the Jews and Their Lies,” where he referred to the Jews as a miserable and accursed people.<sup>217</sup> He emphasizes his inability to tolerate the Jews: “What shall we Christians do with these rejected and condemned people, the Jews? Since they live among us, we dare not tolerate their conduct, now that we are aware of their lying and revealing and blaspheming.”<sup>218</sup> Anti-Semitism and Israel’s rejection primarily exist because many believe that it was the Jews that ultimately killed Christ. History teaches us the influence of Martin Luther and the Reformation, but leaders should call out and acknowledge this rhetoric used to describe the Jews. Evangelical leaders should consider these words and perspective on supersessionism by British commentator C.E.B Canfield:

It is only where the Church persists in refusing to learn this message, where it secretly — perhaps quite unconsciously! — believes that its own existence is based on human achievement and so fails to understand God’s mercy to itself that it is unable to believe in God’s mercy for still unbelieving Israel, and so entertains the ugly and unscriptural notion that God has cast off His people Israel and simply replaced it by the Christians Church. These three chapters [Romans 9—11] emphatically forbid us to speak of the Church as having once and for all taken the place of the Jewish people. But the assumption that the Church has simply replaced Israel as the people of God is extremely common. And I confess with shame to having also myself used in print on more than one occasion this language of the replacement of Israel by the Church.<sup>219</sup>

Supersessionism will continue to be a discussion and have significant influence worldwide.

These implications should lead to discussions within evangelical organizations and churches to better understand how intergenerational trauma impacts Christianity at large. Supersessionism

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217. LW 47 47:137; WA 53:417. Michael J. Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010, Accessed October 13, 2021), 54. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=617525>.

218. Michael J. Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), Accessed October 13, 2021), 36-54. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=617525>.

219. C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of The Epistle to The Romans*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 388-448.

still affects people and the Church worldwide. But evangelical leaders should reckon with the dangers of these ideologies and how it has ultimately shaped their organizations, views concerning the Church, human beings created in the image of God, and the eschatological implications of God's Kingdom. Not only does the Bible distinguish between God's plan for Israel and His plan for the Church, but it teaches the difference between saved and lost Jewish individuals, which is dismissed by supersessionism.<sup>220</sup>

### **Objectives for the Church**

Three main objectives shape the role of the Church: 1). To live as one diverse body, 2). For the Church to Edify the Body and its Parts to Build the Kingdom of God, and 3). Proclaim the Kingdom of God. How does the Church pursue these objectives? In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul uses the word body, or *sōma*, eighteen times in these passages. In this chapter, Paul addresses the Gentiles and how diversity within the body of Christ is found through the variety of gifts. Each person is given the manifestation of the Spirit, not for himself, but for the common good of the body of Christ.<sup>221</sup> Common good translates to *sumferō*, which means to bring together, to be helpful, better, or beneficial.<sup>222</sup> Particularly in verse 7, Paul emphasizes the common good because he understands how powerful the body of Christ is when the diversity of gifts is activated. The body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body are one with Christ. Paul states, "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body— Jews or Greeks,

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220. D.A. Carson, R.T. France, J.A. Motyer, and G.J. Wenham, *New Bible Commentary*, (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 770-811. Thomas Ice, *What is Replacement Theology* (Lynchburg, VA: Liberty University, 2009).

221. StepBible, Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, accessed (July 26, 2021), <https://www.stepBible.org/?q=version=ESV|reference=1Cor.12&options=VHNUG>.

222. 1 Cor 12:12-13.

slaves, or free, and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”<sup>223</sup> In verse 13, Paul reminds the Gentiles of their baptism into the body of Christ, revealing that regardless of status, ethnicity, and class, all were made to drink of one Spirit.<sup>224</sup> Baptism by the Spirit is into one body where racial origins or secular status make no difference because the source of the Christian spiritual life is the Spirit.<sup>225</sup>

Functioning as one body is impossible if Christians do not edify and value the body, its diversity, and its many members, who collectively make up the Church. The body does not consist of one member but many distinct members. Paul illustrates the codependent nature of the body and the purpose of each member by stating:

Now, if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact, God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.<sup>226</sup>

Christians are called to be and function as one body without compromising gifts that have been given to the Church. The Church has an opportunity to reveal God’s Kingdom to the world, but

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223. 1 Cor 12:12-13.

224. 1. Cor 12:12.

225. 1 Cor 12:13.

226. 1. Cor 12:15-26.

the question is, how does it see and value the diversity of the body and world God created? How does the Church acknowledge the importance of diversity, deconstruct, and divest from theology that promotes homogeneity within the Church, and pursue oneness in Christ by operating as one body? This is only made possible by Christians living life in the Spirit.

Life in the Spirit enables Christians to not only function as the diverse body of Christ, but it is the fuel for proclaiming God's Kingdom. George Ladd says, "The Holy Spirit who one day will completely transform us so that we become like the Lord Jesus Christ in His glorified body has come to us before the arrival of the New Age to dwell within our hearts, to give us the life of the Kingdom here and now that we may enjoy fellowship with God."<sup>227</sup> In John 16:7, Jesus tells His disciples that it is to their advantage that He go away because if He does not, the Helper, the Holy Spirit, will not come to them. This is critical because the purpose of the Kingdom, and the role of the Holy Spirit, is to prove the world to be in the wrong about sin, righteousness, and judgment about sin because people lacked faith in Christ.<sup>228</sup> The Holy Spirit is the guide to truth, making the revelation of God's Kingdom understandable and possible for Christians to experience. The good news of the Gospel is the proclamation of God's Kingdom and how humanity has an opportunity to participate in what God is doing in the world.

Satan is earth's ruler, and there will always be a war. The Kingdom of God is a direct threat to Satan's Kingdom, and Christians have the keys to break down the gates of hell that keep people in bondage.<sup>229</sup> The Church is more than a bureaucratic institution and instrument God

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226. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God*, 80-95.

227. Carson, France, Motyer, and Wenham, *New Bible Commentary*, (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 770-881. John 16:7-9.

228. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God*, 80-95.

229. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God*, 80-95.

uses to reveal himself to the world. The Church is called to serve as first responders that pull people away from the gates of hell and into the place of refuge from Satan's kingdom, reign, and rule. The Church is called to rescue individuals spiritually and personally by establishing Kingdom representation. As God's redemptive and active rule in Christ, God created the Church and worked through the Church in the world.<sup>230</sup> The Church is not designed to replace, repurpose, or be God's Kingdom. Instead, the Church rescues people from Satan's kingdom by recruiting people into the Kingdom of God. The Church is not a substitute for the Kingdom of God. It points and leads people to the Kingdom. The Church is a mission post designed to rescue people for Christ's return by equipping people to the world and recruiting more individuals. The Church is merely a taste of what the Kingdom is supposed to be, as it awaits the New Heaven and New Earth. In summary, the Church's role is to live as one diverse body, proclaim the Kingdom of God through the Holy Spirit's witness, and edify the body of Christ and its parts for the building of the Kingdom of God.

Before the foundations of the world, God chose humanity to reflect His image and likeness, and He is the only One who gives purpose and value to individuals. The implications of supersessionism theology are dangerous. This is evident considering the amount of racism that exists, particularly within Evangelicalism and the American Church. There are necessary discussions leaders must have as they seek to understand how intergenerational trauma continues to impact Christianity. This requires the local and global Church to remember its place in the world in history. It is not God's Kingdom, and it did not replace Israel. The Church was not designed to give purpose to humans because the Church cannot save the world. God does not

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230. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God*, 80-115. Matt 16:17-18.



need the Church's help to save the world, but He desires to use the Church. God allows His people opportunities to borrow His gifts, and the Church has the privilege of participating in what God is doing in the world. Christ calls the church to be salt and light. Considering this information, we will examine the implications for the church and the impact of race, discipleship, and racial justice.

### **Implications for the Church**

In Matthew 5:13-16, Christ says to His disciples, "But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, giving light to everyone in the house.

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."<sup>231</sup> If the Church wants the world and the things of the world, the Church will lose its saltiness, but if the Church seeks to be salt and light, it should desire to be proactive and prepared for the rapidly changing world. This perspective of Jesus can help Christians evaluate how they make disciples that model the life and ministry of Jesus.<sup>232</sup> If the Church is designed to prepare individuals for the Kingdom, then what is the role of discipleship and spiritual formation? Do Christians know how to make disciples of all nations holistically? Are there hesitations White evangelicals have concerning racial diversity within their organizations? Evangelical organizations lacking diversity is not a diversity issue, and it is not an

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231. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God*, 80-115.

232. Matt 5:13-16.

issue of there not being qualified candidates of color. Instead, evangelicals need to confront diversity by evaluating their ministry philosophy, discipleship, and organizational structures that keep their organizations homogenous.<sup>233</sup> Suppose evangelical leaders desire to understand how intergenerational trauma impacts individuals from a biblical and theological perspective. In that case, it is worth considering the history of the Israelites, Black ecclesiology, and how their understanding of the Kingdom, the doctrine of humanity, and the Church's role impacts their theological worldview.

N.T. Wright reminds us that the early Jesus followers did not focus much attention on the question of what happened to people immediately after they died at the rapture. They were more concerned with the Kingdom of God being lived out on earth as in heaven, fulfilling the Kingdom's agenda, and making Kingdom disciples.<sup>234</sup> N.T Wright gives extraordinary language in describing the motivations of the early Church by stating:

What mattered was the ultimate restoration of the whole of creation, with God's people being raised from the dead to take their place in the running of this new world. Whatever happened to people immediately after death was, by comparison, unimportant, a mere interim. However, it might seem incredible, the early Jesus-followers really did believe that God's Kingdom was not simply a future reality, though obviously, it had a strong still-future dimension. God's Kingdom had already been launched through the events of Jesus' life. Unless we get this firmly in our heads, we will never understand the inner dynamic of Paul's mission.<sup>235</sup>

The early Church developed a holistic and inclusive theology that focused on unity within the body of Christ, without individuals having to denounce their culture and experiences. When addressing unity, it is essential to understand that this does not imply the following:

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233. David Swanson, *Rediscovering the White Church: From Cheap Diversity to True Solidarity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. May 19, 2020), 8-14.

234. Wright, *Paul: A Biography*, 105.

235. Wright, *Paul: A Biography*, 105.

accommodation, acculturation, assimilation, conformity, uniformity, or sameness. Unity is a reflection of the Godhead, the Trinity, with three distinct Persons— the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, each unique in their personhood and yet in one essence and individuality.<sup>236</sup> For Christians to respond to God’s call fully, they need to express our interdependent diversity in individual Churches, denominations, organizations, and the worldwide body of Christ.<sup>237</sup> Christians must realize that the Kingdom of God is not confined to a human understanding of God and His kingdom, nor is it something that is to be fully comprehended. Christians living their lives as a kingdom priesthood, and obedient and faithful disciples, is the only way they can participate in what God is doing in the world. The calling of the new humanity is to consistently live under the rule of God and the lordship of Jesus over every area of life.<sup>238</sup> The developments of the early Church, biblical justice, the Kingdom agenda, and Kingdom discipleship can serve as foundational principles for leaders seeking to understand racial reconciliation. The foundation of racial reconciliation is rooted in our kinship, covenant, and liberation through Christ, creating space for Mujerista theology.

Moreover, we see intergenerational trauma throughout Genesis and Exodus, which reminds us of God’s promises to the world that came through the second exodus, Christ Himself. This chapter examined the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and the Israelites and demonstrated signs of intergenerational trauma that manifested throughout multiple generations. We examined various perspectives concerning humans reflecting God’s image and likeness and unpack various theologians and perspectives that impacted how White Christians viewed Black

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236. Evans, *Oneness Embrace: Reconciliation, The Kingdom, and How We Are Stronger Together*, 38-52.

237. Evans, *Oneness Embrace: Reconciliation, The Kingdom, and How We Are Stronger Together*, 52.

238. Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart*, 17.

people. We explored the eschatological implications of God's Kingdom, various perspectives on the Kingdom, and implications for Christians. In addition, we dissected various perspectives concerning human image and likeness and how theologians, scholars, and individual beliefs impact action in the world. Lastly, we examined perspectives concerning the Church's role in the world and how the Church integrates and lives out God's Kingdom on earth. These topics were strategically examined because they impact the next few chapters. Leaders must consider the importance of theology and how it impacts American history and the American Church. The next chapter will examine a variety of historical narratives that demonstrate signs of intergenerational trauma within leaders. We will explore the complexities and tensions between Black and White Christians by exploring the civil rights movement, the Promise Keepers, and today's contemporary issues.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Historical Literature Review**

“The greatest movement for social justice our country has ever known is the civil rights movement, and it was totally rooted in a love ethic.”

-Bell Hooks

#### **Overview**

This chapter will offer a historical analysis and literature reviews that address the impact of intergenerational trauma and its effects on Black leaders. The first section of this chapter focuses on the Civil Rights Movement, its leaders, and the White evangelical response to the civil rights movement. We will examine how White evangelicals leveraged and used their platforms to influence Christians socially, politically, and theologically. In addition, we will observe the role of slavery led to the Jim Crow era, segregation, and the rise of the Moral Majority, which influenced organizations like Promise Keepers. The second section will focus on the Promise Keepers movement and their attempt to reconcile men from all racial backgrounds by promoting a commitment to Jesus, fellow neighbors, and family. This section will focus on the successes and limitations of the Promise Keepers movement and how it shaped men and Christianity in the 1990s. The third section focuses on contemporary literature and controversial topics such as White Fragility and Critical Race Theory.

These topics have severely impacted Evangelicalism, racial relationships, and we will discuss varying opinions, definitions, and understandings of these two topics. This chapter seeks to address the historical implications of intergenerational trauma, and its effects on Black leaders. Due to the legacy of slavery and unaddressed trauma, America’s reconstruction era ultimately led to a theological crisis within Evangelicalism, but while creating new pathways for

Black people, it led to Jim Crow which negatively impacted Black people. What were the implications of segregation and how did Christian leaders respond to this new era in America?

### **The Civil War and Jim Crow**

Even though slavery was abolished during the Civil War, Reconstruction led to the well-known Jim Crow era, where discrimination against Black people became the focus within the new and “free” society. Still, the era of Jim Crow, which was a derisive slang term for a Black man, led to different rules for Blacks and Whites.<sup>1</sup> Jim Crow laws were based on the theory of White supremacy and were a reaction to Reconstruction.<sup>2</sup> In response to Jim Crow segregation, the modern civil rights movement began its work in the 1950s, after World War II. During Reconstruction, Black people took on leadership roles by holding public office and sought legislative changes for equality and the right to vote.<sup>3</sup> In 1868, with the thirteenth amendment, the Constitution gave Black men full citizenship and promised them equal protection under the law.<sup>4</sup> Racism became more overt than ever and appealed to Whites who feared losing their jobs to Blacks, politicians who abused Blacks to win the votes of poor Whites, and biased newspapers who played up Black crimes in hopes of influencing White readers.<sup>5</sup> In their *Plessy v. Ferguson*

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1. Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2014), 239-271. History.com Editors, “Civil Rights Movement,” History, May 17, 2021, accessed (August 24, 2021), <https://www.history.com/topics/Black-history/civil-rights-movement>.

2. Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*, 190-271. History.com Editors, “A Brief History of Jim Crow,” accessed (August 24, 2021), <https://www.crf-usa.org/Black-history-month/a-brief-history-of-jim-crow>.

3. Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, 239-271. History.com Editors, “Civil Rights Movement,” History, May 17, 2021, accessed (August 24, 2021), <https://www.history.com/topics/Black-history/civil-rights-movement>.

4. Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*, 190-271. History.com Editors, “A Brief History of Jim Crow.”

ruling, the US Supreme Court ruled that public facilities for Blacks and Whites could be separate but equal, which was the fuel and driving force for Jim Crow segregation in America, particularly in the American South. Jim Crow impacted how Blacks and Whites worked together, where they lived, were medically treated, and the quality and access to education. The following important question is, “What role did Jim Crow segregation play within American society, and how did evangelicals respond?”

Jim Crow laws did not account for the suffering, mistreatment, abuse, and trauma Blacks endured from ordinary White civilians, politicians, and the police.<sup>6</sup> Jim Crow led to discriminatory practices throughout the entire country, segregation being promoted by the majority culture, and the birth of hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK).<sup>7</sup> Even though there was positive outrage concerning the tactics of the KKK, the whittling down of racism to sheet-wearing White men allowed a cloud of racial innocence to cover many Whites who, although “resentful of Black progress” and determined to ensure that racial inequality remained untouched, could see and protect themselves as the “kind of upstanding White citizens.”<sup>8</sup> Intentionally, focus on the KKK helped White evangelicals designate racism as an individual aberration instead of systemic, institutional, and pervasive.<sup>9</sup>

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5. Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*, 190-271. History.com Editors, “A Brief History of Jim Crow,” accessed (August 24, 2021), <https://www.crf-usa.org/Black-history-month/a-brief-history-of-jim-crow>.

6. Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 113-143.

7. Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*, 164-177, 649-654.

8. Carol Anderson, *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide* (London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury, 2017), 124.

9. Anderson, *White Rage*, 124. See, for example, Ben Shapiro, “Dylann Roof Was Ultimate Lone Wolf, Left Blames Right Anyway,” Breitbart, (June 22, 2015), accessed August 16, 2021, <https://www.breitbart.com/the-media/2015/06/22/dylann-roof-was-ultimate-lone-wolf-left-blames-right-anyway/>.

The irony of joining the KKK was that White individuals must be “Christian” and not Catholic or Jewish. Jim Crow exposed the inequality within America, and these tensions became greater politically and socially.<sup>10</sup> Due to their involvement during the Civil War and losing the war over race and slavery, many White Christians were largely silent during Reconstruction and the Jim Crow era. “In 1948, President Truman took decisive action to promote racial equality. He urged Congress to abolish the poll tax, enforce fair voting and hiring practices, and end Jim Crow transportation between states. Four Southern states abandoned Truman’s Democratic Party in protest. Then, as commander in chief, Truman ordered the complete integration of the armed forces. He did not wipe out racism but trained individuals to obey commands; officers complied as best they could. In Korea, during the 1950s, integrated U.S. forces fought their first war.”<sup>11</sup>

After Truman’s presidency, Dwight Eisenhower was elected, but he was not a civil rights movement supporter. In 1950, the NAACP recognized the inequalities concerning economic mobility for Blacks and the overcrowding of schools; and challenged the concept of separate but equal.<sup>12</sup> Cases addressing the overcrowding of schools became national news and eventually made it to the Supreme Court. On May 17, 1954, the nine Justices announced their unanimous decision in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case of Topeka, KS, to integrate schools—emphasizing that separate educational facilities are inherently unequal and violated the

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10. Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution*, 164-177, 629-654.

11. Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution*, 239-271. History.com Editors, “Civil Rights Movement.”

12. Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution*, 239-271. History.com Editors, “Civil Rights Movement.”



Constitution's fourteenth amendment.<sup>13</sup> This was the first major legal victory for the civil rights movement and the fight for justice and equality.

### **The Civil Rights Movement**

On September 9, 1957, President Eisenhower signed the Civil Rights Act of 1957 into law, the first major civil rights legislation since Reconstruction. Despite the Civil Rights Act being signed into law, Congress provided for court-appointed referees to help Black people register to vote three years later. In addition, the passed laws were weakened so that politicians would not have to deal with southern resistance.<sup>14</sup> Post Eisenhower, in 1961 John F. Kennedy entered the White House, and despite initially delaying support of anti-discrimination measures, when police brutality and suppression of nonviolent demonstrations became national news, Kennedy decided to act.<sup>15</sup>

During Kennedy's presidency, the "Freedom Riders" drew international attention. On Mother's Day 1961, the Freedom Riders' bus reached Anniston, AL, where a mob mounted the bus and threw a bomb into it.<sup>16</sup> Despite escaping the bus, the freedom riders were greeted with violence, brutally beaten, and put onto another bus to continue their trip under police escort.<sup>17</sup> The officers abandoned the bus once they arrived in Montgomery, where a White mob attacked the passengers, leading Attorney General Robert Kennedy to respond by calling Dr. Martin

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13. Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*, 239-271. History.com Editors, "Civil Rights Movement."

14. Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*, 239-271. History.com Editors, "Civil Rights Movement."

15. Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*, 239-271. History.com Editors, "Civil Rights Movement."

16. Tisby, 113-143. Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*, 239-271. History.com Editors, "Civil Rights Movement."

17. Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the America Church's Complicity in Racism*, 100-143.

Luther King Jr. and sending federal marshals to Montgomery. On May 24, 1961, a group of Freedom Riders reached Jackson, Mississippi, and was welcomed by hundreds of supporters. But the group was arrested for trespassing in a Whites-only facility and sentenced to thirty days in jail. This ultimately led the Kennedy administration, and the Interstate Commerce Commission, to implement regulations prohibiting segregation in interstate transit terminals.<sup>18</sup>

### **Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965**

One of the most impactful moments of the civil rights movement was the march in August 1963 in Washington, D.C., organized by civil rights leaders. More than 200,000 people of all races joined for a peaceful demonstration emphasizing civil rights legislation and equality for all Americans. The highlight of this event was Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech, which became the slogan for equality and freedom, and his speech continues to be the hope for many Americans today. King is often recognized for his elegant words, charismatic energy, and deep conviction. There were two impactful moments in King's speech that communicated his hope and conviction for America. Consider the following statement that has been used for decades to promote unity and solidarity. "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."<sup>19</sup> Many Americans believe in this sentiment expressed by King, however, this was not the primary message he communicated during his speech. The second significant message of King's speech was,

The Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself in exile in his own land. And so we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition. In a sense, we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our

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18. Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*, 239-271. History.com Editors, "Civil Rights Movement."

19. Rebecca Roberts, 'I Have a Dream' Speech, In Its Entirety (NPR: Race, January 18, 2010, Accessed March 2, 2021), <https://www.npr.org/2010/01/18/122701268/i-have-a-dream-speech-in-its-entirety>.

republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men - yes, Black men as well as White men - would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked insufficient funds. But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so, we've come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.<sup>20</sup>

King did not water down his message on unity and intentionally addressed how inequality still impacts Black people in America. King urged America to honor their promise in promoting and instituting equality for all people. Though King earned the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 for his optimism and unwavering commitment to nonviolence, the public ignored King's most forthright admonitions.<sup>21</sup> On July 2, 1964, King and other civil rights activists attended the signing of the Civil Rights Act, which by law guaranteed equal employment for all, limited the use of voter literacy tests, and allowed federal authorities to ensure public facilities were integrated.<sup>22</sup> In addition, under the Civil Rights Act, segregation on the grounds of race, religion, or national origin was banned at all places of public accommodation, including courthouses, parks, restaurants, theaters, sports arenas, and hotels. It meant that Black people and other minorities could no longer be denied service based on the color of their skin.<sup>23</sup>

Despite progress being made with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, on March 7, 1965, the civil rights movement in Alabama took a violent turn. Over 600 peaceful and non-violent

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20. Roberts, *'I Have A Dream' Speech, In Its Entirety*.

21. Mehrsa Baradaran, *The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap*, (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017), 158.

22. Baradaran, *The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap*, 155-158.

23. Baradaran, *The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap*, 155-158.

demonstrators participated in the march from Selma, AL, to the Alabama state capital of Montgomery to protest the killing of Black civil rights activist Jimmie Lee Jackson by a White police officer and encourage legislation to enforce the 15th amendment.<sup>24</sup> When the protesters neared the Edmund Pettus Bridge, they were blocked by Alabama state and local police sent by Alabama governor George C. Wallace, a vocal opponent of desegregation.<sup>25</sup> It was well within these protesters' American liberties to move forward, and as they proceeded, they were violently beaten and tear-gassed by police, leaving many hospitalized. Despite this "Bloody Sunday" being televised, King continued to press forward with nonviolent protests and eventually gained federal protection.<sup>26</sup>

### **The Fair Housing Act**

Following King's assassination, the Fair Housing Act became law on April 11, 1968. The last major legislation enacted during the civil rights era, the Fair Housing Act, prevented discrimination based on race, sex, national origin, and religion.<sup>27</sup> This bill was debated in the Senate but was passed quickly by the House of Representatives in response to the struggle for fair housing, government, and federal funding for Black people in America.<sup>28</sup> The Fair Housing Act was a response to many Black people and people of color who fought in World War II; and their inability to live in their home of choice because of their race. From 1950 to 1980, the total

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24. Baradaran, *The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap*, 155-158.

25. Baradaran, *The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap*, 155-158.

26. Baradaran, *The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap*, 155-158.

27. Baradaran, *The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap*, 155-158.

28. Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York, NY: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017). History.com Editors, "Fair Housing Act," History, 2021, accessed (July 13, 2021), <https://www.history.com/topics/Black-history/fair-housing-act.id>.

Black population in America's urban centers increased from 6.1 million to 15.3 million people.<sup>29</sup> This is part of the major Black migration from the American South to the Urban North and West described by Isabel Wilkerson in *The Warmth of Other Suns* and Nicholas Lemann's book, *The Promised Land*.

Because of the rapid growth of the Black population, White Americans moved out of the cities into suburbs, taking many of the employment opportunities from Black people and moving them into communities where Black people were not wanted.<sup>30</sup> This "White flight" led to the overpopulation of the inner-cities and urban communities and left Black people living in subpar housing. White flight dates to the 1940s when FHA loans secured loans for White Americans, which contributed to racial discrimination practices such as redlining, steering, and blockbusting. The belief was that an influx of Black people could reduce a neighborhood's home prices directly due to the FHA policy.<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, Black homeowners could not obtain conventional mortgages, which created the conditions for neighborhood deterioration.<sup>32</sup> The impact of blockbusting, steering, and redlining was prominent starting in the 1940s, and Beryl Satter described these conditions of White flight and the urban communities by stating:

Because Black contract buyers knew how easily they could lose their homes, they struggled to make their inflated monthly payments. Husbands and wives both worked double shifts. They neglected basic maintenance. They subdivided their apartments, crammed in extra tenants, and, when possible, charged their tenant's hefty rent... White people observed that their new Black neighbors were overcrowded and neglected their properties. Over-crowded neighborhoods meant overcrowded schools.... In the end, Whites fled these neighborhoods, not only because of the influx of Black families but also because they were upset about overcrowding, decaying schools, and crime.... But Black contract buyers did not have the option of leaving a declining neighborhood before

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29. Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, 32-110.

30. Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, 90-95.

31. Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, 95.

32. Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, 97.

their properties were paid for in full—if they did, they would lose everything they’d invested in that property to date. Whites could leave— Blacks had to stay.<sup>33</sup>

According to Beryl Satter, “Blockbuster tactics became a vehicle for segregating Whites and Blacks. Blockbusting included hiring Black women to push carriages with their babies through White neighborhoods, hiring Black men to drive cars with radios blasting through White neighborhoods, paying Black men to accompany agents knocking on doors to see if homes were for sale, or making random telephone calls to residents of White neighborhoods and asking to speak with someone with a stereotypically Black name.”<sup>34</sup> Ultimately, these illegal practices led to the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) investigation by its Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity.<sup>35</sup> Although the Fair Housing Act of 1968 banned discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of property, it did not combat the covert racism that existed and kept Black people from being able to purchase property or secure equitable interest rates.<sup>36</sup> Despite the Fair Housing Act of 1968 and other efforts to amend the segregation issues concerning housing for Black Americans, Richard Rothstein argues that the federal government was responsible for a segregated America.<sup>37</sup> Despite this information, what happened during this period after the Fair Housing Act?

### **Civil Rights Leaders Assassinated**

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33. Beryl Satter, *Family Properties: How the Struggle over Race and Real Estate Transformed Chicago and Urban America* (New York, NY: Henry Holt, 2009).

34. Satter, *Family Properties: How the Struggle over Race and Real Estate Transformed Chicago and Urban America*.

35. Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, 50-126. History.com Editors, “Fair Housing Act,” (History, May 17, 2021, accessed July 12, 2021), <https://www.history.com/topics/Black-history/fair-housing-act.id>.

36. Foner, 239-271. History.com Editors, “Civil Rights Movement.”

37. Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, 23-79.

The influence of the civil rights movement and prominent leaders is undeniable, but their efforts for equality led to the death and murder of many leaders. Malcolm X and Dr. King began to work together in their later years as they fought against segregation and racism in America. Both found racism in America to be an attack on human dignity and life and began to seek the help of the United Nations. Between 1960 and 1970, many civil rights leaders and individuals were intentionally assassinated. Herbert Lee on September 25, 1961, Medgar Evers on June 12, 1963, Louis Allen January 31, 1964, the bombing of 4 little girls in Birmingham, AL, at 16th Street Baptist Church in 1963, Viola Liuzzo on March 25, 1965, and (at the age of 21), Fred Hampton was assassinated on December 4, 1969. Most notable, on February 21, 1965, Malcolm X was assassinated at a rally by individuals from the Nation of Islam. On April 4, 1968, King was assassinated on his hotel room's balcony, which led to rage, anger, grief, and riots.

### **White Evangelicals and The Civil Rights Movement**

In describing the impact of racism during the civil rights movement, what role did American evangelicals play during the 1960s and 1970s? That is a question that Dr. Anthea Butler has addressed in her work, *White Evangelical Racism*. What did evangelicals do during the civil rights movement? Jerry Falwell Sr. was one of the founding leaders of the “Religious Right” and “Moral Majority” (a term coined by conservative activist Paul Weyrich), which solidified its role in America in the late 1970s. Falwell was admittedly opposed to the civil rights movement and often criticized Martin Luther King Jr.’s advocacy and involvement in politics.<sup>38</sup> However, the moral majority had “conservative” values they desired to promote, and those did not involve them in conversations about racism in America.

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38. Anthea Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 53.

Butler questions the authenticity and moral convictions concerning abortion held by evangelicals. She believes that race hatred played a fundamental role in evangelicals pursuing a color-blind gospel amidst criticism of the civil rights movement underneath the surface.<sup>39</sup> She argues that color-blindness provided a cover for their racially motivated organizing against the federal government and the evangelical push to block the implementation of the hard-won gains of the civil rights movement.<sup>40</sup> What exactly is a “color-blind” gospel? A color-blind gospel focuses on the unity of the Church while simultaneously disregarding the ethnic diversity that serves as the makeup of the Church.<sup>41</sup> However, as discovered throughout chapters one and two of this thesis project, color-blindness is more about making Black and other ethnic evangelicals conform to Whiteness and accept White leadership as the norm religiously, socially, and politically.<sup>42</sup> Butler writes:

For evangelicals, the years from the seventies to the nineties were defining ones, encompassing their cultural acquiescence to the inclusion of African Americans in their churches, revivals, and schools while simultaneously fighting against the gains of the civil rights movement in the political and legal arena. Holding on to racist ideologies, including prohibitions against race-mixing, dating, and marriage. Evangelicals embraced an intransigence that spurred them on to political activism and organizing—the very thing for which Falwell had come down on King just a few years earlier. Using morality and color-blind conservatism as a shield, evangelicals made new political alliances and created organizations, such as the Moral Majority, that would promote their favored issues while continuing to embrace racist practices and strategies to consolidate economic and political power.<sup>43</sup>

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39. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 53.

40. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 53.

41. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 53-54.

42. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 53-55.

43. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 54-98.



As mentioned, the civil rights movement produced two significant pieces of legislation, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Both of which worked alongside other substantial governmental and cultural changes to dismantle the Jim Crow era restrictions under which millions of African Americans lived.<sup>44</sup> These acts led to a White flight from cities and suburbs, the creation of private institutions, and the conception of “color-blind conservatism.”<sup>45</sup> Color-blind conservatism rested on the idea that since the government was “taking care” of race reform, there was no need for conservatives to discuss racial issues in-depth, in detail, or with sincerity.<sup>46</sup> Color-blind conservatism forced the hand of denominations like the Southern Baptist Convention and prominent White evangelical leaders to approach their issues with the civil rights movement and segregation. Race Relation Sunday’ led to White and Black leaders collaborating by sharing and swapping pulpits to promote this very agenda.<sup>47</sup> Race Relation Sundays demonstrated that many Black evangelicals like William Bentley embraced color-blind conservatism.

Bentley was the second president of the National Negro Evangelical Association and suggested that Black fundamentalists, Pentecostals, and Black graduates of evangelical schools could not be expected to articulate a Black ethnic viewpoint, given the dominance of conservative, White-led institutions in the religious world.<sup>48</sup> However, Black culture is not a monolith, and in the mid-20th century, two prominent Black leaders approached conversations of

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44. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 57.

45. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 57.

46. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 49-57.

47. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 49-57.

48. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 56.

race and politics differently. Tom Skinner, previously mentioned, and Bill Pannell. Skinner and Pannell address the lack of concern White evangelicals had towards Black identity, dignity, and freedom. Commenting on the efforts of White evangelicals to practice color-blind conservatism, Pannell wrote, “I have no trouble with you wanting me in your church to sing on Sunday. However, I have very little faith that you want me in your living room for serious discussions. Yet, here is where the breakthrough may take place.”<sup>49</sup> When further addressing evangelicals, Pannell addressed their issues with intermarriage, finding it to be an unspoken core issue for many evangelicals. In his book *Now about Your Daughter*, Pannell poignantly wrote about the fear of sex and negro men: “The ghost of negro sex prowess and White female purity still mocks us in the closets of our minds. Neither Protestant theology nor education has dispelled it. Bible Belt Fundamentalism, which served as a midwife when it was born, still serves to nurse it in its old age.”<sup>50</sup> Pannell’s book offered an honest, blunt reflection, by an evangelical in the tradition, on the broader social and cultural prohibitions from the nineteenth century that persisted despite evangelicals’ slow moves to improve race relations.<sup>51</sup>

### **The Moral Majority**

Issues related to race, especially interracial marriage, education, and housing, were front and center in the 1960s. In 1967, interracial marriage became fully legal in the Supreme Court’s *Loving vs. Virginia* case decision. The hot-button issues related to the role became the major factor in how evangelicals came together to develop unprecedented political activism and form a

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49. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 57.

50. William Pannell, *My Friend, the Enemy* (New York, NY: Word Books, 1972).

51. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 58.

formidable voting bloc.<sup>52</sup> Consider Butler's analysis of institutions like Bob Jones University in chapter three of *White Evangelical Racism*. Many evangelicals and fundamentalists held on to nineteenth-century beliefs regarding scripture and how the Israelites should not mix with other people.<sup>53</sup> Bob Jones University became a catalyst for evangelical political activism by standing true to its beliefs concerning interracial marriage and relationships. Bob Jones University unraveled a more profound issue beyond interracial marriage during the civil rights era.<sup>54</sup> For many evangelicals, education became the next vehicle they would use to cover up their disdain for integration. Despite abortion being the most visible issue for evangelicals during the civil rights movement, according to Balmer, it is evident that abortion was not the core issue for evangelicals, nor is it the issue presently.<sup>55</sup>

Randall Balmer dispels the myth concerning evangelicals and fundamentalist priorities surrounding abortion. Balmer makes a case for segregation as the primary agenda for the moral majority, not abortion, and the Supreme Court decision in the *Roe v. Wade* case. The foundational issue was segregation, and education became the catalyst and focused for evangelicals. In response to the desegregation of public schools, several integrated schools were established in the mid-1960s due to the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954.<sup>56</sup> Due to

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52. See additional commentary in Randall Balmer, *Black Faith: Race and the Rise of the Religious Right*, (Grand Rapids, MI. Eerdmans, 2021).

53. Balmer, *Black Faith: Race and the Rise of the Religious Right*, 60.

54. See additional commentary in Randall Balmer, *The Real Origins of the Religious Right: They'll tell you it was abortion. Sorry, the historical record's clear: It was segregation*, Politico, May 24, 2014, accessed (June 29, 2021), <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/05/religious-right-real-origins-107133>.

55. See additional commentary in Randall Balmer, *Black Faith: Race and the Rise of the Religious Right*, 2021.

56. Randall Balmer, *The Real Origins of the Religious Right: They'll tell you it was abortion. Sorry, the historical record's clear: It was segregation*.

racist beliefs directed toward Black men, Black women, and the purity of the White race, these tropes from the nineteenth century, coupled with miscegenation laws and readings of scripture, combined to make integration one of the most feared governmental edicts for many evangelicals, fundamentalists, and White conservatives.<sup>57</sup> Following World War II, evangelicals, especially White evangelicals in the North, drifted toward the Republican Party— inclined in that direction by general Cold War anxieties, vestigial suspicions of Catholicism, and Billy Graham’s public friendship with Dwight Eisenhower and Richard Nixon.<sup>58</sup> Evangelicals avoided popularity and the political arena; however, a surge toward power and influence began during the civil rights era with the emergence of the Moral Majority. This influence was promoted, and several figures were involved with the Moral Majority’s influence, particularly Paul Weyrich.

### **Paul Weyrich and Evangelical Priorities**

Paul Weyrich, the late religious conservative political activist, desired to change this narrative by convincing evangelicals to form large voting blocs that supported conservative causes. This large voting bloc included evangelicals and Catholics in hopes of becoming a powerful voting bloc that would change society.<sup>59</sup> In 1966, Weyrich was press secretary to Republican senator Gordon Allott of Colorado and established himself as a significant conservative influencer committed to conservative ideologies.<sup>60</sup> In the mid-1970s, Weyrich wrote: “The new political philosophy must be defined by us conservatives in moral terms, packaged in non-religious language, and propagated throughout the country by our new

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57. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 58.

58. Balmer, “*The Real Origins of the Religious Right: They’ll tell you it was abortion. Sorry, the historical record’s clear: It was segregation.*”

59. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 63.

60. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 63.

coalition. When political power is achieved, the moral majority will have the opportunity to re-create this great nation. The leadership, moral philosophy, and workable vehicle are at hand, just waiting to be blended and activated. If the moral majority acts, results could exceed our wildest dreams.”<sup>61</sup> Over time, Weyrich’s ideologies penetrated evangelicals with his stances and evangelical interest concerning pornography, prayer in schools, the proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution, and abortion. This became evident in the 1971 case *Green v. Connally*.<sup>62</sup> The *Green v. Connally* ruling denied charitable exemptions to institutions that intentionally segregated themselves. This ruling captured the attention of evangelical leaders, mainly as the IRS audited academic institutions such as Bob Jones University and Liberty University concerning their racial policies.

During the presidency of Jimmy Carter, Weyrich used *Green v. Connally* as an opportunity to rally evangelicals against the democratic president. Determined to elect a conservative, Weyrich and Falwell tapped into their influence with evangelical leaders and created a grassroots movement to justify racial discrimination. The presidential election of 1980 was essential to Weyrich and Falwell, and they began to organize evangelical voters. To cover up his disbelief on integration, Weyrich focused on and supported the notion of the traditional nuclear family and believed it was the responsibility of the government to keep traditional families intact. After stepping down from official politics, the IRS decision forbidding tax-exempt status for private schools was enough ammunition for Weyrich. Evangelicals protested their disagreement with their private schools being audited by inundating the IRS with more than 120,000 letters opposing the new policy concerning private school tax exemptions.<sup>63</sup> These

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61. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 58.

62. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 58-75.

letters led the IRS to decrease its percentage requirements for providing integration of Christian schools.<sup>64</sup> Butler notes that this tactic of flooding government officials with letters, phone calls, and later, emails became an important part of evangelical political strategy in the 1970s and beyond.<sup>65</sup> It was a new strategy for evangelicals, and the Moral Majority, to further their agenda when it came to topics surrounding pornography, homosexuality, and abortion. In other words, Weyrich and Falwell planned to use these hot topics to justify segregation and racism within their institutions and communities. In the 1980s, it became evident that the moral majority gained traction and influence and had their eyes on the White house.<sup>66</sup>

The Moral Majority played a vital role in the election of Ronald Reagan. Weyrich, Falwell, and others invited Reagan to speak to a group of evangelicals in Dallas in August 1980, and Reagan shared the stage with several prominent evangelical leaders.<sup>67</sup> This event was a catalyst for evangelical influence in politics. Despite Reagan being one of the first governors to sign a state abortion law into order in 1967 in California, his speech affirmed the core beliefs of the Moral Majority, and he became the political representative White evangelicals.<sup>68</sup> Today, many evangelicals believed the Moral Majority failed to influence Reagan's presidential policies. However, the Moral Majority successfully galvanized evangelicals and created offshoot organizations to promote family issues invested in influencing education, voting, etc.<sup>69</sup> Undoing

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63. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 58-75.

64. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 64.

65. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 64.

66. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 65.

67. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 65.

68. Fred Barnes, "Ronald Reagan, Father of the Pro-Life Movement," (WSJ, November 6, 2003, Accessed August 1, 2021), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB106808204063174300>.

the work of the civil rights movement was not the explicit goal for evangelicals, but in part, what I have described, demonstrates the lack of focus and concern for civil rights issues, integration, and equal rights. Evangelical concerns for abortion, homosexuality and the nuclear family were merely ways of disguising that they did not want integrated schools, interracial marriages, and equal housing opportunities for Black people in America. Clinging to their historical beliefs concerning the curse of Ham and their interpretation of humanity being created in God's image, evangelical disassociation with the civil rights movement demonstrates its complicity in terms of racism and White supremacy.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, it demonstrates signs of theological beliefs concerning Black dignity, and equality that contradicts American values evangelicals affirm, and perpetuate intergenerational trauma.

Evangelicals continued to galvanize their influence by promoting their agenda and core issues which the Moral Majority deeply influenced. Unfortunately, these evangelicals disconnected themselves from the civil rights movement's core issues, racism, and injustice, by creating their subculture to disguise their fear of integration. Abortion, homosexuality, and interracial marriage only disguised their attempts at best to cover up their issues with integration, racial equality, and segregated schools. Many evangelicals largely ignored 300 years of racism and trauma in their political power and influence efforts. Considering the legislation passed during the 1950s to 1970s, evangelicals ignored the civil rights movement. They assumed that issues of racism were addressed by the government, Dr. King, and the civil rights movement and through color-blind conservatism, which ultimately led to Skinner's criticism of White evangelicals:

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69. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 68.

70. See additional commentary by Carl Ellis, *Free at Last? The Gospel in the African American Experience*, 2020.

Understand that for those of us in the Black community, it was not the evangelical who came and taught us our worth and dignity as Black men. It was not the Bible-believing fundamentalist who stood up and told us that Black was beautiful. It was not the evangelical who preached to us that we should stand on our own two feet and be men, be proud that Black was beautiful, and that God could work his life out through our redeemed Blackness. Rather, it took Stokely Carmichael, Rap Brown, and the brothers to declare to us our dignity. God will not be without a witness.<sup>71</sup>

Many evangelicals today continue to align with the core values of the 1980s Moral Majority while denying the real issues surrounding racism that impact their institutions. Other topics worth exploring are economic mobility, housing, redlining due to White flight, and reminisce of Jim Crow segregation. The justification for private schools and the willingness to give up charitable tax exemptions demonstrate that evangelical beliefs about abortion, homosexuality and good education masked their fear concerning matters of race and ethnicity. Accepting color-blindness and a post-racial America minimizes the protest during the civil rights movement, purpose, and power. Color-blind conservatism often uphold racial discrimination, racist ideas, and stereotypes concerning Black men, Black women, White women's purity, education, and the discouragement of interracial marriage unspoken by many evangelicals.

Forward progress during the civil rights movement radically and fundamentally impacted America. But it did not solve the problem of race, systemic racism, and evangelical beliefs concerning education, segregation, and neighborhood zoning. Despite some preliminary discussions in the 1960s and 1970s, these issues of racism, color-blindness, and injustice continued into the 1990s. The formal organization of the moral majority ignored racial equality and equal rights for all Americans for their limited concerns. Evangelical attempts at mobilizing, organizing, and influencing society by gaining political influence destabilized the civil rights movement and what it set out to accomplish. The civil rights movement had outstanding

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71. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 57.



achievements, and although many people marvel at the work of civil rights leaders, their work did not make America a post-racial America. America being post-racial continues to be a core belief with many individuals who demonstrate color-blind conservatism. Color-blind conservatism demonstrates the effects of intergenerational trauma on Black leaders because it makes it difficult for White Americans to address unconscious beliefs.<sup>72</sup> While the idea of color blindness may have started as a well-intentioned strategy for minimizing racism, it has served to deny the reality of racism and further sustain it.<sup>73</sup> Despite the heavy celebration, praise, and criticism for America being post-racial, evangelical influence continued to spread in the 1980s and 1990s. This next portion examines evangelical influence and failed attempts at racial reconciliation in the 1990s through Promise Keepers' organization and movement.

### **Promise Keepers**

In 1990, Bill McCartney had a vision for Promise Keepers and racial reconciliation after confronting inner racism during his coaching years. McCartney spent a great deal of time recruiting young Black men in football, and that experience enlightened McCartney and brought awareness concerning the problems of race and racism.<sup>74</sup> The reality of racism confronted McCartney when his daughter Kristy had a child with quarterback Sal Aunese, a Samoan player from California.<sup>75</sup> Thoughts plagued McCartney as he wrestled through legitimate fears for his

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72. DiAngelo, 42.

73. DiAngelo, DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2018), 42.

74. Daniel Silliman, "Promise Keepers Tried to End Racism 25 Years Ago. It Almost Worked," Christianity Today, June 21, 2021, accessed (August 22, 2021), <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2021/july-august/promise-keepers-racial-reconciliation-reconsidered.html>.

75. Silliman, "Promise Keepers Tried to End Racism 25 Years Ago. It Almost Worked."

grandson, but there was another event that made racism more evident for McCartney.<sup>76</sup>

McCartney attended a funeral at a predominantly Black church, and while listening to the music, he encountered the Holy Spirit. When speaking about McCartney's experience, former staff member Bob Swenson said, "He told me that he just began to weep. He didn't know what was going on. He just felt this pain, joy, and it was a profound spiritual awakening."<sup>77</sup> The spiritual awakening at the funeral convicted McCartney. It revealed the realities of racism that it was a great sin, and the church was responsible for enabling such sin in the world.<sup>78</sup> This ultimately led him to be convinced that no Christian would prosper unless racial reconciliation were a priority.<sup>79</sup>

Promise Keepers was one of the largest movements in the 1990s, and it forced many White evangelicals to reckon with racism in ways not seen since the civil rights movement itself.<sup>80</sup> Initially, Promise Keepers was predominantly White, and initially, McCartney felt that men did not want to be sermonized about racial reconciliation.<sup>81</sup> Instead, McCartney wanted to evangelize, get active in the work of reconciliation, and build relationships across racial lines. As a result, Promise Keepers meetings were designed to be non-confrontational on a structural level, and they had seven promises that men were to commit to:

1. A Promise Keeper is committed to honoring Jesus Christ through worship, prayer, and obedience to His word through the power of the Holy Spirit.
2. A Promise Keeper is committed to pursuing vital relationships with a few other men, understanding that he needs brothers to help him keep his promises.
3. A Promise Keeper is committed to practicing spiritual, moral, ethical, and sexual purity.

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76. Silliman, *"Promise Keepers Tried to End Racism 25 Years Ago. It Almost Worked."*

77. Silliman, *"Promise Keepers Tried to End Racism 25 Years Ago. It Almost Worked."*

78. Silliman, *"Promise Keepers Tried to End Racism 25 Years Ago. It Almost Worked."*

79. Silliman, *"Promise Keepers Tried to End Racism 25 Years Ago. It Almost Worked."*

80. Silliman, *"Promise Keepers Tried to End Racism 25 Years Ago. It Almost Worked."*

81. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, 78.

4. A Promise Keeper is committed to building strong marriages and families through love, protection, and biblical values.
5. A Promise Keeper is committed to supporting the church's mission by honoring and praying for his pastor and actively giving his time and resources.
6. A Promise Keeper is committed to reaching beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity.
7. A Promise Keeper is committed to influencing his world, being obedient to the Great Commandment (Mark 12:30-31) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).<sup>82</sup>

The goal was for men to commit to being godly and the spiritual leaders of their homes.<sup>83</sup> Based on various interviews, Daniel Silliman, current news editor for *Christianity Today*, wrote about the Promise Keepers movement and their attempt at solving racism. With this framework, the following sections will examine the limited successes, failures, and a range of perspectives concerning the topic of reconciliation and racism. However, we must explore various perspectives concerning Promise Keepers, limited successes, and failures.

### **Limited Success and Failures**

During the late 1980s and 1990s, racial reconciliation leaders exploded onto the scene and began to impact the movement on a national scale. These leaders included: Glandion Carney, Curtiss DeYoung, Craig Keener, Tony Evans, John Perkins, Carl Ellis, Brenda Salter McNeil, Miroslav Volf, Bill McCartney, and others. John Perkins served as the godfather of racial reconciliation efforts. The Promise Keepers staff was over 30 percent persons of color from various racial groups.<sup>84</sup> Silliman notes the first event was held in July 1991 with 4,200 men in a basketball arena, pushing the agenda of racial reconciliation and communicating that if African Americans and other minorities were not part of Promise Keepers, God would withhold his

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82. Daniel Silliman, *"Promise Keepers Tried to End Racism 25 Years Ago. It Almost Worked."*

83. Silliman, *"Promise Keepers Tried to End Racism 25 Years Ago. It Almost Worked."*

84. Michael Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 64.

presence and favor.<sup>85</sup> McCartney's contagious charisma captured the attention of men, including a diversity of speakers who spoke at future engagements. Speakers brought to address racial reconciliation and unity at these events were: Tony Evans, E.V. Hill, Crawford Loritts, Raleigh Washington, Wellington Boone, Rodney Cooper, and A.R. Bernard.<sup>86</sup> These well-known speakers' influence and McCartney's passion led to their second event in a football stadium, hosting more than 52,000 men.<sup>87</sup>

Many people compared Promise Keepers events to Billy Graham revivals, specifically for men to express themselves in worship by creating an experience that moved their hearts.<sup>88</sup> The Promise Keepers movement created an opportunity for various cultures to come together, express themselves emotionally, communicate, and ultimately know what it meant to be godly men.<sup>89</sup> The Promise Keepers were indeed impacting the lives of men and American culture abroad. The organization expanded beyond free events and created partnerships with churches, service projects, scholarships, and resources like devotionals, men's groups, and books. Promise Keepers had a tremendous impact cross-culturally, but missed opportunities ultimately contributed to its radical fall in the late '90s. One of the downfalls for Promise Keepers was disunity around racial reconciliation and how men were to apply this to their life.

### **Raleigh Washington**

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85. Silliman, *"Promise Keepers Tried to End Racism 25 Years Ago. It Almost Worked."*

86. Silliman, *"Promise Keepers Tried to End Racism 25 Years Ago. It Almost Worked."*

87. Silliman, *"Promise Keepers Tried to End Racism 25 Years Ago. It Almost Worked."*

88. Silliman, *"Promise Keepers Tried to End Racism 25 Years Ago. It Almost Worked."*

89. Silliman, *"Promise Keepers Tried to End Racism 25 Years Ago. It Almost Worked."*

Raleigh Washington served as Vice President of Reconciliation of Promise Keepers. Reconciliation was at the heart of the Promise Keepers movement, and men with various backgrounds attended their events. Washington being the vice president of reconciliation, often spoke from the perspective of White men repenting. White men repenting was often obscure and a point of contention for the organization and White men who participated in the rallies. For many men, this was the first time they engaged cross-culturally in relationships with people of different ethnic groups and did not understand the need for repentance for sins they did not commit against their brother. But when Washington spoke on reconciliation, this was the dominant lens, and it caused friction within the community and organization.

Washington often left individuals feeling overwhelmed with his messages because they were new to cross-cultural relationships, and the rallies were mostly White men. In 1997, during a rally in Washington, D.C., the organization made efforts of corporate repentance for the sins of prayerlessness, disobedience to God's word, sexual immorality, sins of abuse towards families, falling prey to culture, and taking the Bible out of schools, etc. Nevertheless, Washington had the support of McCartney, who tried to help White men understand that there was reconciliation work to accomplish for the unintentional damage done to the Black community. Unfortunately, Washington's perspective on reconciliation and his call for corporate repentance to White men ultimately contributed to the organization's downfall. The organization was divided on its approach to addressing racism and reconciliation, but there were other perspectives and critiques about Promise Keepers worth considering.

In 1997, in Washington DC, Promise Keepers held one of the largest events, with nearly one million men who attended the event. Following this historic event, the movement was faced with its worst nightmare, and it began to collapse because people were fatigued when it came to

racism and reconciliation. This decline led McCartney to re-strategize, finding new resources and funding, and later, 345 staff members were terminated.<sup>90</sup> According to Donald Burgs, the movement ultimately declined, dissolved, and became irrelevant, leading White Americans back to the suburbs. Following the Promise Keepers' decline, many White evangelicals began to disengage altogether from the conversation of racism and reconciliation. Some wonder if society was ready for such a radical focus on racial reconciliation in the 1990s. Despite Promise Keepers reaching millions of people, it did not solve racism in America, and various feminist scholars heavily criticized them.

### **Stiffed by Susan Faludi**

Feminist, Susan Faludi, sought to understand better the organization, its purpose, and its impact on men across the world. The group's promise of virtuous manhood had spawned a nationwide following almost overnight, culminating in 1997 in a massive convocation on the Washington Mall, broadcast live on C-SPAN.<sup>91</sup> The men who joined Promise Keepers sought to build something greater than the sum of their individually distressed lives.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, their occupational betrayal and civic betrayal had been compounded by a powerful sense of domestic betrayal, which the Promise Keepers sought to address.<sup>93</sup> Faludi believes Promise Keepers desired to join a grand struggle of manhood, that would restore men to love for their wives and

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90. Silliman, *"Promise Keepers Tried to End Racism 25 Years Ago. It Almost Worked."*

91. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, (New York, NY: William Morrow Publisher {HarperCollins Publishers}, 2000), 368.

92. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 368-370.

93. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 368-370.

children and the conviction that they were embarking on a mission that would earn them appreciation and purpose within society, backed by the brotherhood.<sup>94</sup>

Faludi believed the Promise Keepers movement sought to become masters of their households' spiritual life, religious authorities who would take charge of the domestic circle through "submission" and "servitude."<sup>95</sup> For many feminist groups, such counsel sounded suspiciously like sugarcoated instructions to plant patriarchal boots right back on their wife's neck.<sup>96</sup> Faludi examined this further and alluded to various speakers crowding themselves with tattooed Christian motorcycle gangs with chants of "Power, power, we got the power!"<sup>97</sup> However, the men who attended Promise Keepers conferences were not all biker outlaws; they were the "good sons, and they ensured that the men who attended their conferences were bought into the idea of reclaiming Biblical manhood."<sup>98</sup> Moreover, Promise Keepers structured their understanding of Biblical manhood beliefs around Ephesians 5:22, "Wives, submit to your husbands," which was the same directive that the SBC added to their official credo of belief in 1998.<sup>99</sup> In addition, the onstage lectures hailed uniformly from a religious right that had famously thrown itself with punitive zeal into a decades-long body block of women's progress.<sup>100</sup> Faludi

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94. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 368-370.

95. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 370.

96. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 370.

97. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 370.

98. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 374.

99. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 370.

100. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 370-384.

mentioned that McCartney dedicated himself to the criminalization of abortion, decrying homosexuality, and gender roles within marriage.<sup>101</sup>

Reclaiming Biblical manhood was essential to the Promise Keepers movement, but Faludi believed it promoted a stealth campaign of misogyny and macho dominance.<sup>102</sup> Faludi thinks that Promise Keepers desired for patriarchal household through a “traditional” male order, seeking to overthrow femininity in the world implicitly.<sup>103</sup> The speakers and movement made men feel guilty and ashamed during the rallies. They were defeated because they were reminded of their failure to their families, the Church, country, reconciliation, complicity in racism, and their brothers. However, a Promise Keepers-commissioned survey of men attending stadium events in 1994 found the group of mostly middle-aged men to be dutiful, upright, and eager to comply with social expectations of propriety and judgment.<sup>104</sup> Despite men from across the world committing to the organization's promise, Faludi had the opportunity to interview McCartney about the purpose and mission of Promise Keepers.

Faludi visited the Promise Keepers headquarters in Denver and interviewed McCartney, seeking to understand the purpose of Promise Keepers. In essence, he answered her question about why American men responded vigorously to their organization.<sup>105</sup> McCartney believed the deepest longing of the human spirit screams for significance, and the only way you can achieve real relevance is to fulfill your purpose.<sup>106</sup> Faludi asked McCartney what purpose Promise

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101. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 370-372.

102. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 370-372.

103. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 374.

104. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 376.

105. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 378.

106. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 378.



Keepers provided men, and he responded by stating, “They come in touch with home much he loves them... You think of the guy that most closely approximates what it means to be a loving father and a loving husband, and he doesn’t even scratch the surface when it comes to how much God loves us. See, God the Father loves us so much, with passion, intensity, comprehensive care for us, and concern that he doesn’t sleep. He never slumbers! He watches over us day and night. And he’s always pulling for us.”<sup>107</sup> For Faludi, this did not capture the true essence of Promise Keepers’ purpose. During this interview, McCartney shared his desire to help young men, which seemed ironic to Faludi because he was a former coach who abandoned a team full of young men to lead an organization whose members were overwhelmingly over thirty.<sup>108</sup>

Faludi struggled with McCartney’s response because the University of Colorado Buffaloes was known for its stunning arrest records. The players’ criminal activities were so profligate that *Sports Illustrated Magazine* reported that the police often carried copies of the Buffaloes’ roster when they went to investigate crimes.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, two dozen players were arrested for burglary, sexual assault, or rape in one three-year stretch, and McCartney was not a beloved coach.<sup>110</sup> During this interview, it was clear to Faludi that there were disconnects between the purpose of Promise Keepers, Bill McCartney, and the need to reach young men. However, the focus on family and men taking charge of their families is undeniable.

When it came to McCartney’s reputation as a coach, and his family, Faludi noted that no disciplinary action was taken on the team and it did not impact McCartney’s reputation.

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107. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 378.

108. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 378.

109. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 378.

110. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 378.

However, McCartney could hardly overlook incontrovertible evidence of his daughter's seduction by certain players.<sup>111</sup> McCartney's daughter told him that the two of the team's star players impregnated her, making him the grandfather of two illegitimate babies.<sup>112</sup> Other individuals at the interview attempted to defuse the conversation, and then McCartney began to speak about his radical transformation and understanding of Isaiah 38:19 further. Faludi spoke about McCartney's wife, Lyndi, and her struggles within their marriage, the disconnect between what Promise Keepers believed about men being present and servants for their families, and her life experiences. In McCartney's book, *From Ashes to Glory*, Lyndi stated, "It was a nightmare. Bill never saw the boys play football until they were in high school." Faludi stated that Lyndi did not think much of Bill's spiritual leadership before or after he founded Promise Keepers and that he cosigned her to a "bottom-shelf existence."<sup>113</sup> This led Lyndi into a deep depression, and out of desperation, she drank herself unconscious, but from Bill's observation, he saw her losing weight, and he was proud.<sup>114</sup> Faludi concluded the interview because she realized that McCartney was not why men were flocking to Promise Keepers. She realized that there were disconnects for McCartney based on what Promise Keepers preached, promoted, and modeled.<sup>115</sup>

Faludi believes Promise Keepers' solution to this work-marriage dilemma was masterful.<sup>116</sup> It created a pathway for men to cement their identity in Jesus by reclaiming a new

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111. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 378-380.

112. Bill McCartney, *From Ashes to Glory*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1990), 51-52. Richard Hoffer and Shelley Smith, *Putting His House in Order*, (Sports Illustrated, January 16, 1995), 29.

113. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 381-384.

114. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 381.

115. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 381.

116. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 389.

form of the masculine role within the family, not as breadwinners but as spiritual pathfinders. However, for Faludi, the ingenuity of such a solution was that it slipped the traces of traditionally male work identity without challenging the underlying structure of the American male paradigm; that paradigm was reformulated in religious-battle terms.<sup>117</sup> In essence, the mission became the spiritual salvation for families, and failed to sustain its racial reconciliation efforts. Through Promise Keepers, men view themselves as the provider and protector. However, Faludi believed it was at the expense of women and how it impacted individual families.

### **The Unrealistic Desire**

Promise Keepers desired to reconcile men across racial lines while dealing with internalized racism, but they were not balanced enough and did not address institutional, structural, and systemic racism. As a result, people often felt like they had accomplished reconciliation, but matters of inequality and injustice in the country did not concern them. When addressing tensions around personal racism and societal injustices, Silliman writes:

If a man in a stadium became convinced that he had failed to honor God in worship—the Promise Keepers’ first promise—he could lift his hands right then, weep, ask for forgiveness, and commit himself to church and prayer and Bible reading when he returned home. The same with Promise No. 2, to build better relationships with Christian brothers; or No. 4, to take care of his marriage; or No. 5, to lift up the nation in prayer. The emotional moment in the crowd at a big Promise Keepers event was understood as just the start. But with No. 6—racial reconciliation—no one left with a plan to address the effects of White flight on their community or inequities in education, employment, or policing—though there were voices in the church raising such discussions at that time. Men had an emotional experience, listened to a Black preacher, and hugged a minority brother. That seemed to be that.<sup>118</sup>

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117. Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 389.

118. Silliman, “*Promise Keepers Tried to End Racism 25 Years Ago. It Almost Worked.*”

The Promise Keepers accomplished exposure to the realities of personalized racism without structures to ensure lasting internal and external transformation within society and individuals. When discussing racial reconciliation, Anthony Moore, a Black pastor from Baltimore, believes, “There was such an ambiguous explanation. What does it look like? Who gets to set the terms? When it comes to reconciliation—I don’t think we ever came to a clear path forward.”<sup>119</sup> This further amplified the fact that not all leaders were on the same page concerning racism, inequalities, injustices, racial reconciliation, and the impact on minorities.

Why did the racial reconciliation movements in the 1990s fall by the wayside? The more the conversations around systemic and institutionalized racism, the more tensions arose and the harder it became for individuals to proceed forward with the movement. Promise Keepers did not offer tangible ways that men, especially White men, could respond to racism in their commitments. However, perspectives ranged from person to person, Black leader to Black leader, and White leader to White leader. For example, Wellington Boone, a Black pastor from Indianapolis, wanted to use slavery as a helpful spiritual metaphor.<sup>120</sup> He told a primarily White audience in Indiana that “slavery was good, in some ways, because it teaches us what our relationship to God should be like. He said in his church; the deacons were given the title ‘slave.’”

On the other hand, A.R. Bernard was asked to speak about racism and reconciliation but did not feel the White evangelicals were ready for his message. Bernard condemned White Christians for saying hypocritical irrelevancies in the middle of a call of God to rid the nation of racial and economic injustice.<sup>121</sup> This caused a great deal of tension within the organization

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119. Silliman, *“Promise Keepers Tried to End Racism 25 Years Ago. It Almost Worked.”*

120. Silliman, *“Promise Keepers Tried to End Racism 25 Years Ago. It Almost Worked.”*

because some White people felt it was too much. Others were frustrated by the emphasis on generational sin that forced White men to take responsibility for things that happened 130 or 150 years before.<sup>122</sup> Racial impacted the organization as donors communicated that they were not interested in becoming a civil rights organization.<sup>123</sup> Mark Pollard, a Black special associate of Promise Keepers, was convinced that the gospel was not colorblind, which are indicators of conservative color blindness transmitted from the Moral Majority that continues to transmit today and harm people.

Michael Emerson and Christian Smith sought to connect religion and race relations and address Promise Keeper's efforts. Emerson and Smith analyzed the Promise Keepers movement and found that the organization reduced racial division and inequalities.<sup>124</sup> Many Black advocates called out the sin of "indifference" and did not think White leaders should sit on the sidelines while unequal and oppressive forces harm a part of the Christian community.<sup>125</sup> Conversely, White people felt that Black people needed to repent their anger and hatred toward White people and the system.<sup>126</sup> Samuel Hines notes, "We need each other. Because of community interdependence, we all hold the key to other people's freedom. White people can't free

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122. Silliman, *"Promise Keepers Tried to End Racism 25 Years Ago. It Almost Worked."*

123. Silliman, *"Promise Keepers Tried to End Racism 25 Years Ago. It Almost Worked."*

124. Silliman, *"Promise Keepers Tried to End Racism 25 Years Ago. It Almost Worked."*

125. See additional commentary by Michael Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*, 2000.

126. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in American*, 55.

themselves of their guilt, fears, and prejudices. Black people can't free themselves of oppression and injustices. Racial divisions are robbing both sides."<sup>127</sup>

Stillman argues that the movement was not built to last, and highlights concerns about McCartney's leadership that began to arise. According to Stillman, McCartney believed he was hearing directly from God and did not discuss decisions with his board or individuals within his circle— which included ignoring any pushback around Promise Keepers focusing too much on racial reconciliation.<sup>128</sup> Hearing from God directly was connected to McCartney's Pentecostal beliefs and traditions. The leadership of Promise Keepers went on retreat to discuss standards within the organization, which seemed a crossroads for the organization, according to Randy Phillips. Promise Keepers focused on telling men what to do and how they should measure up to the standards of godly men rather than communicating what God had already done for the men. These tensions were obvious for Promise Keepers, but the organization doubled down on diversity and racial reconciliation without considering how men would integrate back into their homes.<sup>129</sup>

### Summary

Faludi had several interviews for her research in her book and provided a helpful perspective, from a feminist view, that speaks to the organizations' culture, purpose, and mission. She contributes a perspective highlighting the complexities of cross-culturally collaborating and having strong convictions that align with individual religious beliefs. One

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127. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in American*, 55.

128. Samuel Hines and Joe Allison, *Experience the Power* (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 1993), 26.

129. Silliman, "Promise Keepers Tried to End Racism 25 Years Ago. It Almost Worked."

question worth considering is “What happened to White Evangelicalism post Promise Keepers and how were men and families impacted?” What did they not say after the racial reconciliation efforts of the 1990s? Many leaders have addressed the response to racial reconciliation efforts within Evangelicalism, but there seems to be a disconnect in the approach towards addressing reconciliation. There were disagreements within Promise Keepers on how to go about reconciliation. One group felt that White men needed to repent for their sin against Black men. The other group desired to focus on the present reality and the attitudes that prevent reconciliation from happening. Therefore, there was no forceful rejection of racism because there was no unity surrounding racism within Promise Keepers. Faludi highlighted that Promise Keepers left men with no place to turn to and failed them in this regard.

For example, Carl Ellis attended the Million Man March and reflected on the method and the focus of reconciliation among White evangelicals as he saw it was not enough. He said, “Tears and hugs and saying I’m sorry is a good first step, but for me, the question is not one of changing the hearts of individuals as much as it is dealing with the systems and the structures that are devastating for African American people.”<sup>130</sup> Ellis believed that the Promise Keepers’ message on reconciliation reached White audiences but failed to help individuals understand the importance of systemic change.<sup>131</sup> Emerson and Smith believe that something was lost in translation within the organization. According to Emerson and Smith:

Promise Keepers do have an impact, though, evident in two ways. First, strong evangelicals— those most integrated into the subculture— are more likely to know about racial reconciliation than other evangelicals— 51 percent compared to 26 percent. Second, among strong evangelicals, men, at 61 percent, are much more likely to know about racial reconciliation than women, at 43 percent. In contrast, for weak to moderate

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130. Silliman, *“Promise Keepers Tried to End Racism 25 Years Ago. It Almost Worked.”*

131. Steve Rabey, *Seedbed for Revival?* (Christianity Today, 1997), 90.

evangelicals, there is no gender difference— about 25 percent of both groups know about racial reconciliation. Thus, the message of racial reconciliation brought by evangelical organizations is doing a better job at reaching strong evangelicals.<sup>132</sup>

Emerson and Smith conducted several interviews and concluded that the walls go up when a radical message like racial reconciliation is pushed. Those in conservative Christian subcultures will inevitably stop listening and move on with their lives, disengaging altogether.<sup>133</sup> The difficulties in addressing racism and racial reconciliation continue to be difficult conversations for many White evangelicals today. Emerson and Smith address various sociological patterns within Evangelicalism that are worth exploring. Racial reconciliation attempts continued as the Promise Keepers dissolved, and similar tensions surrounding institutionalized and systemic racism continue to divide Christians today.

The Promise Keepers played a vital role in the 90s, and their influence and impact on the world are undeniable. We examined the origins of Promise Keepers, tensions around reconciliation, and criticism by feminist scholar Susan Faludi. These criticisms are worth further exploration because Promise Keepers undeniably led the nation in reconciliation efforts. If they could not sustain their progress, what does it expose about racial reconciliation efforts and how to engage in contemporary discussions of race and ethnicity? How do contemporary discussions impact intergenerational trauma for leaders working within predominantly White organizations? The next section of this chapter will examine current contemporary discussions surrounding White Fragility and CRT. This next section will explore the books *White Fragility* and *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* and the authors' perspectives and critics by various Black scholars.

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132. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in American*, 66.

133. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in American*, 116.



## Contemporary Discussions: White Fragility

Robin DiAngelo wrote *White Fragility* to address how White people in America live in a social environment that protects and insulates them from race-based stress.<sup>134</sup> White fragility has affected various cultures, organizations, and individuals. For some, it gives vocabulary describing various experiences and encounters with White individuals. It leads to guilt, rage, discomfort, and further denial for some, demonstrating DiAngelo's theory. For some, it is another racist ploy that causes additional damage and hinders the progression of racial healing. These perspectives help to explain the tensions surrounding White fragility within America.

Common behaviors of White fragility are denial, arguing, withdrawing, crying, rationalizing, claims of being attacked, and seeking to understand better common behaviors and how they intersect with intergenerational trauma. With the United States becoming rapidly multicultural, White fragility has created intentional conversations surrounding racial identity and the challenge for multiracial individuals. DiAngelo suggests that these various ideologies have shaped America through the good/bad binary, implicit bias, individualism, internalized superiority/investment in the racial order (often unconscious), universalism, and the power of segregation.<sup>135</sup> This literature provides an opportunity to explore the unconscious ramifications within predominantly White organizations.

DiAngelo's book contains twelve chapters that conclude with helpful ways for White people to overcome forms of White fragility that manifest when talking about racism. This portion will not examine all twelve chapters but will provide high-level insights from

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134. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in American*, 148.

135. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 67-123.

DiAngelo's work. History demonstrates that addressing racism within the White community is complicated. She begins the book by highlighting how White people in America live in a deeply separated and unequal society by race. White people are the beneficiaries of that separation and inequality.<sup>136</sup> White people are often insulated from racial stress while feeling entitled and deserving of their advantage within society.<sup>137</sup> In 2020, megachurch pastor Louie Giglio attempted to redefine White fragility in ways and caused an uproar via social media. *Washington Post* writer Sarah Pulliam Bailey unpacked Giglio's conversation with hip-hop artist Lecrae Moore and Chick-fil-A chief executive Dan Cathy. Giglio said, "We understand the curse that was slavery, White people do. And we say that was bad. But we miss the blessing of slavery, that it actually built up the framework for the world that White people live in."<sup>138</sup> Based on DiAngelo's premise, statements like Giglio's reveal how White people are socialized into a deeply internalized sense of superiority that they are either unaware of or can never admit to themselves.<sup>139</sup> Giglio's attempt to reframe and make White fragility translate into the Christian culture could be considered an attempt to protect pre-existing biases without examining oneself and the change required for solidarity and healing. DiAngelo sees this as a byproduct of having a simplistic understanding of racism. She urges White people to become comfortable with the discomforts of discussing racism and considering racist tendencies within themselves.

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136. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 71-87.

137. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 1.

138. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 1.

139. Sarah Pulliam Bailey, *Atlanta megachurch pastor Louie Giglio sets off firestorm by calling slavery a 'blessing' to Whites* (The Washington Post, June 16, 2020), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2020/06/16/atlanta-megachurch-pastor-louie-giglio-sets-off-firestorm-after-calling-slavery-White-blessing/>.

DiAngelo addresses and dispels the myths taught about so-called biologically and genetic distinctions between races.<sup>140</sup> She argues that race is socially constructed within the context of America and that myths surrounding biology and genetics affirm America's racism and White supremacy. In other words, it is about controlling the perception of race— an evolving social idea created to legitimize racial inequality and protect the White advantage.<sup>141</sup> First, DiAngelo addresses the origins of the word “White,” which first appeared in colonial law in the late 1600s.<sup>142</sup> She writes, “By 1790, people were asked to claim their race on the census, and by 1825, the perceived degrees of blood determined who would be classified as Indian.”<sup>143</sup> From the late 1800s through the early twentieth century, as waves of immigrants entered the United States, the concept of a White race was solidified.<sup>144</sup> She then unpacks the realities of race and its socially constructed impact on various economic classes.

In chapter two, DiAngelo works through history, the post-civil-rights era, and the various forms of racism, prejudice, and discrimination. One controversial statement from DiAngelo has often offended many White people— the premise that only White people can be racist. DiAngelo writes, “When I say that only Whites can be racist, I mean that in the United States, only Whites have the collective social and institutional power and privilege over people of color. People of

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140. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 2.

141. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 15.

142. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 17.

143. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 17.

144. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 17.

color do not have this power and privilege over White people.”<sup>145</sup> DiAngelo wants White people to understand is that we do not live in a post-racial society and the difficulties White people have seeing and acknowledging racism. She manages the complexities of recognizing racism while still benefiting from a system that privileges Whites as a group.<sup>146</sup> These complexities were precisely what Giglio was attempting to communicate while expressing how White people should be grateful, but that was not the reality of his words and the context of the conversation. These realities connect with DiAngelo’s conclusion on how Whiteness is a position of status.

Critical race scholar Cheryl Harris coined the term “Whiteness.” In the context of critical race theory, which is a legal history and examination, Harris explains:

By according Whiteness an actual legal status, an aspect of identity was converted into an external object of property, moving Whiteness from privileged identity to a vested interest. The law’s construction of Whiteness defined and affirmed critical aspects of identity (who is White); of privilege (what benefits accrue to that status); and of property (what legal entitlements arise from that status). Whiteness at various times signifies and is deployed as identity, status, and property, sometimes singularly, sometimes in tandem.<sup>147</sup>

DiAngelo drew upon this statement and argued that Whiteness rests upon a foundational premise: the definition of White as the norm or standard for humans and people of color as a deviation from that norm.<sup>148</sup> DiAngelo emphasizes how White people do not acknowledge Whiteness, and the White reference point is assumed to be universal. It is imposed on everyone,

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145. Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea* (New York: NY, Oxford University Press, 1997); Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

146. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 22.

147. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 24.

148. Cheryl I. Harris, *Whiteness as Property* (Harvard Law Review 106, no.8, 1993), 1744.

making it difficult for White people to think about and discuss.<sup>149</sup> When you consider the writings of W.E.B. Du Bois and James Baldwin, Whiteness has been a consistent theme. They urged White people to turn their attention onto themselves to explore what it means to be White in a society that is divided by race.<sup>150</sup>

One reason worth considering why Whiteness has been difficult to discuss is the color-blind rhetoric that has been used historically to dismiss conversations of racism and White supremacy. DiAngelo unpacks the implications of color-blindness in chapter five and discusses the Good/Bad Binary. However, post-civil-rights era, color blindness was promoted as the remedy for racism, with White people insisting that they did not see race or color.<sup>151</sup> DiAngelo further affirms what was emphasized earlier in this chapter and how more explicitly, White evangelicals participated in promoting a color-blind society. However, what this leads to is what DiAngelo calls “Aversive racism.” Aversive racism is a manifestation of racism that well-intentioned people who see themselves as educated and progressive are more likely to exhibit.<sup>152</sup>

Consider the following:

- Rationalizing racial segregation as unfortunate but necessary to access “good schools.”
- Rationalizing that our workplaces are virtually all White because people of color just don’t apply.
- Avoiding direct racial language and using racially coded terms such as urban, underprivileged, diverse, sketchy, and good neighborhoods.
- Denying that White people have few cross-racial relationships by proclaiming how diverse their community or workplace is.

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149. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 25.

150. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 25.

151. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 25.

152. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 41.

- Attributing inequality between Whites and people of color to causes other than racism.<sup>153</sup>

DiAngelo highlights where and why individuals may hold subconsciously racist ideas concerning neighborhoods, crime, etc. She speaks about the role of implicit bias that feeds into the perception of race and crime etc.<sup>154</sup> If Black people are confined to these neighborhoods, what becomes the perspective of Black people in America? Toni Morrison uses the term “Race Talk” to capture the explicit insertion into the everyday life of racial signs and symbols that have no meaning other than positioning African Americans into the lowest level of the racial hierarchy.<sup>155</sup>

In chapter four, DiAngelo describes how race shapes the lives of White people. White people were born in a society that favored them and provided freedom from the burden of race. DiAngelo explains how this freedom from responsibility gives her a level of racial relaxation and emotional and intellectual space that people of color are not afforded as they move through their day.<sup>156</sup> This is often revealed through White solidarity—the unspoken agreement among Whites to protect White advantage and not cause another White person to feel racial discomfort by confronting them when they say or do something racially problematic.<sup>157</sup> DiAngelo explains how “White solidarity requires both silence about anything that exposes the advantage of the White position and tacit agreement to remain racially united in the protection of White

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153. Gordon Hodson, John Dovidio, and Samuel L. Gaertner, *The Aversive Form of Racism, Psychology of Prejudice and Discrimination* (Race and Ethnicity in Psychology, 1, 2004), 116-136.

154. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 44.

155. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 45.

156. Toni Morrison, *On the Backs of Blacks* (Time, December 2, 1993)  
<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,979736,00.html>.

157. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 54-55.

supremacy.”<sup>158</sup> White solidarity implies that silence protects and maintains the racial hierarchy and the individuals' place within it.<sup>159</sup> DiAngelo herself was raised in a society that taught that there was no loss in the absence of people of color— that their absence was a good and desirable thing to be sought and maintained— while simultaneously denying that fact.<sup>160</sup>

### **The Good/Bad Binary**

DiAngelo then explores how racism is adapted through the good/bad binary, which can be associated with a form of cognitive dissonance. According to DiAngelo, being a good, moral person and complicit with racism became mutually exclusive in the post-civil-rights era.<sup>161</sup>

Another perspective was that you were not a moral person if you participated in racism. This manifests within Christianity when individuals state that racism is evil and being a racist is a sin— never confronting their participation and complicity in racism perpetuating within their organization and social lives. DiAngelo addresses the oversimplification of racism and how it is relegated to compartments of hatred, prejudice, and discrimination, in this good/bad binary. Racists are viewed as ignorant, bigoted, prejudiced, mean-spirited, old, and southern— whereas non-racists are viewed as progressive, educated, open-minded, well-intentioned, young, and northern.<sup>162</sup> These perspectives come from a limited view of such a multilayered syndrome that

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158. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 57.

159. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 58.

160. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 58.

161. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 67-69.

162. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 71.

cultivates the sinister nature of racism and perpetuates racist phenomena rather than eradicating them.<sup>163</sup>

According to DiAngelo, these limited views concerning racism prevent progress. DiAngelo provides various statements that is often used by White people: “I was taught to treat everyone the same, I marched in the 1960s, I was the minority at my school, so I was the one who experienced racism, My parents were not racist, and they taught me not to be racist, Children today are so much more open, Race has nothing to do with it, and Focusing on race is what divides us.”<sup>164</sup> It is worth remembering these statements for further examination in chapters four and five of this thesis project.

DiAngelo uses the good/bad binary to reveal how racism propagates anti-Blackness and demonstrates how anti-Black sentiment is integral to White identity. She gives an example of how White people see anti-Black sentiment in how quickly the White assumption justifies images of brutality towards Black children and adults that it must have deserved.<sup>165</sup> This further manifested through protest and organized movements such as Black Lives Matter and Blue Lives Matter. DiAngelo believes this is rooted in anti-Blackness. DiAngelo elaborates on anti-Blackness because, in her view, it is rooted in misinformation, fables, perversions, projections, and lies— filled with a lack of historical knowledge and an inability or unwillingness to trace the effects of history into the present.<sup>166</sup> Moreover, she explains the possibility of anti-Blackness

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163. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 72.

164. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 60-72. Omowale Akintunde, *White Racism, White Supremacy, White Privilege, and the Social Construction of Race: Moving from Modernist to Post-Modernist Multiculturalism* (Multicultural education 7, no. 2, 1999), 1.

165. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 81-87.

166. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 93.



being rooted in deep guilt about what White people collectively have done and continue to do.<sup>167</sup>

This point is worth noting because this writer will describe intergenerational trauma later in this chapter. Carol Anderson argues, “the trigger for White rage, inevitably, is Black advancement. It is not the mere presence of Black people that is the problem; rather, it is the Blackness with ambition, drive, purpose, aspirations, and demands for full and equal citizenships. It is Blackness that refuses to accept subjugation, to give up.”<sup>168</sup> DiAngelo points to examples found in the movie, *The Blind Side*.<sup>169</sup> DiAngelo points out a few themes from the film that are worth considering anti-Blackness:

- White people are the saviors of Black people.
- Some Black children may be innocent, but Black adults are morally and criminally corrupt.
- Whites who are willing to save or otherwise help Black people, at seemingly great personal cost, are noble, courageous, and morally superior to other Whites.
- Individual Black people can overcome their circumstances, but usually only with the help of White people.
- Black neighborhoods are inherently dangerous and criminal.
- Virtually all Blacks are poor, incompetent, and unqualified for their jobs; they belong to gangs, are addicted to drugs, and are bad parents.
- The most dependable route for Black males to escape the “inner city” is through sports.
- White people are willing to deal with individual “deserving” Black people, but Whites do not become a part of the Black community in any meaningful way beyond charity work.<sup>170</sup>

These statements are unintentional messages that DiAngelo believes are communicated.

According to DiAngelo, White racial socialization engenders many conflicting feelings toward Black people: benevolence, resentment, superiority, hatred, and guilt. She notes how “White

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167. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 94.

168. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 94-110.

169. Carol Anderson, *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2016).

170. Hancock,, *The Blind Side* (Warner Bros, 2009).

people's need to deny the bewildering manifestations of anti-Blackness that reside so close to the surface makes them irrational, and that irrationality is at the heart of White fragility and the pain it causes people of color.”<sup>171</sup> The rest of the book examines triggers and ways to address White fragility. This chapter will later examine behaviors and triggers for White people and the impact of racism. Despite DiAngelo's book being a *New York Times* bestseller, it did attract an abundance of criticism. Therefore, the next portion of this chapter will examine criticism of White fragility and its implications. We will examine a few criticisms by various individuals concerning White fragility and how it informs beliefs about racism and America. These criticisms are fair to consider considering what I described above concerning White fragility.

### **George Yancey**

African American scholar George Yancey is widely respected among evangelical scholars and is a professor of sociology at Baylor University. Yancey writes, “DiAngelo's basic thesis is that Whites have been socialized to have a deeply internalized sense of superiority and entitlement. All Whites, then, are racist, but not explicitly and overtly racists; they are racist in that Whites are complicit in society's institutionalized racism. And their defensiveness about this—their fragility—needs to be broken down, DiAngelo argues, if we're to move beyond a White-dominated society.”<sup>172</sup> Yancey believes that implicit bias is a major factor in why people discriminate against others and why anti-racism training does not impact prejudice long-term.<sup>173</sup> In Yancey's view, “How can we test for White fragility? As far as I can tell, the only way a

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171. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 98-99.

172. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 98-99.

173. George Yancey, *Not White Fragility— Mutual Responsibility*, (The Gospel Coalition, 2020, Accessed June 1, 2021), <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/White-fragility-mutual-responsibility/>.

White person *can't* be “fragile” is if they agree with the accusations brought against them. Any reaction other than compliance is taken as evidence of White fragility. This is not useful as a conceptual tool for hypothesis-testing.”<sup>174</sup> Yancey believes that focusing on White privilege decreases sympathy for White people and Black people and perpetuates racial hostility.<sup>175</sup>

When it comes to anti-racism and diversity training, Yancey believes that they have a little long-term effect on prejudice. In addition, focusing on privilege can actually decrease sympathy for poor White people while not raising the overall sympathy for Black people.<sup>176</sup> Lastly, Yancey believes the concept of White fragility becomes an academic way to tell White people to be quiet and listen.<sup>177</sup> If true, then White fragility will continue to frustrate attempts at correcting racism's genuine effects.<sup>178</sup>

### **Cedrick-Michael Simmons**

In June 2020, Cedrick-Michael Simmons wrote an article for *The Bellows* called “I’m Black and Afraid of White Fragility.” Simmons believes that White Fragility expresses DiAngelo’s guilt and fear about her contradictory role as a European-American racial dialogue manager.<sup>179</sup> Simmons thinks she gets paid to be an expert on race and racism despite believing that White folks can never be experts on race and racism.<sup>180</sup> He affirms Yancey’s perspective

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174. Yancey, *Not White Fragility— Mutual Responsibility*.

175. Yancey, *Not White Fragility— Mutual Responsibility*.

176. Yancey, *Not White Fragility— Mutual Responsibility*.

177. Yancey, *Not White Fragility— Mutual Responsibility*.

178. Yancey, *Not White Fragility— Mutual Responsibility*.

179. Yancey, *Not White Fragility— Mutual Responsibility*.

180. Cedrick-Michael Simmons, *I’m Black and Afraid of ‘White Fragility,’* (The Bellows, 2020, Accessed June 1, 2021), <https://www.thebellows.org/im-Black-and-afraid-of-White-fragility/>.

concerning the ineffectiveness of diversity training and impact of theories like White Fragility. DiAngelo's seminars do little to address structural tensions workers navigate daily because they activate and reinforce biases.<sup>181</sup> However, Simmons does not believe that DiAngelo is racist. Still, anyone claiming to be an expert on the sociology of race and racism should recognize the consequences when associating physical characteristics with racial differences.<sup>182</sup> In the article, Simmons emphasizes that White fragility offers nothing to address the structures underlying systemic racism within political and economic institutions or the dramatic decline in state funding for social programs.<sup>183</sup>

### **John McWhorter**

Another subsequent criticism comes from John McWhorter, an American linguist and associate professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia University. McWhorter is a contributing writer at The Atlantic and teaches linguistics at Columbia University.<sup>184</sup> McWhorter thinks DiAngelo's book is a racist tract that elevates and dignifies White people by diminishing Black people.<sup>185</sup> He argues that DiAngelo intends to atone for the original sin of racism by seeking to highlight White peoples' complicity with and investment in racism.<sup>186</sup> McWhorter mentions DiAngelo's seminars and how they impacted White people in attendance.

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181. Simmons, *I'm Black and Afraid of 'White Fragility*.

182. Simmons, *I'm Black and Afraid of 'White Fragility*.

183. Simmons, *I'm Black and Afraid of 'White Fragility*.

184. Simmons, *I'm Black and Afraid of 'White Fragility*.

185. John McWhorter, *The Dehumanizing Condensation of White Fragility*, (The Atlantic, 2020, Accessed June 1, 2021), <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/07/dehumanizing-condensation-White-fragility/614146/>.

186. McWhorter, *The Dehumanizing Condensation of White Fragility*.

His concerns were that DiAngelo belittled and insulted them by being reductionistic. According to McWhorter, DiAngelo's depiction of White psychology:

White fragility shape-shifts according to what her dogma requires. On the one hand, she argues in Chapter 1 that White people do not see themselves in racial terms; therefore, they must be taught by experts like her of their Whiteness. But for individuals who harbor so little sense of themselves as a group, the White people who DiAngelo describes are oddly tribalist White; it suits her narrative. 'White solidarity,' she writes in Chapter 4, 'requires both silence about anything that exposes the advantages of the White population and tacit agreement to remain racially united in the protection of White supremacy.' But if these people don't even know Whiteness is a category, just what are they now suddenly defending.<sup>187</sup>

McWhorter believes that DiAngelo's book makes claims disconnected from reality and dismisses her DiAngelo's claim, particularly towards a section in her book referring to "White Women Tears." DiAngelo implies that when White women cry upon being called racists, Black people are reminded of White women crying as they lied about being raped by Black men eons ago.<sup>188</sup> McWhorter does not find this statement conclusive and critiques DiAngelo for not providing sound evidence. He concludes by stating how White people will never achieve being non-racists because overcoming it is a lifelong journey that inevitably leads to death as a sinner and racist.

### Summary

White fragility is a complex and nuanced topic spanning cultures, social class, and demographics. I have provided an overview of the basic tenants of DiAngelo's book, paired with criticisms intentionally from Black leaders across the spectrum. DiAngelo offers insightful information and perspective concerning the conversation, history, and complexities within White

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187. McWhorter, *The Dehumanizing Condescension of White Fragility*.

188. McWhorter, *The Dehumanizing Condescension of White Fragility*.

American consciousness. Concerning this project, White Fragility only serves as a framework for understanding what White leaders may experience internally by providing language that may contribute to intergenerational trauma. White Fragility demonstrates the nuances of White Americans, and are important for leaders to understand because they can often play out in discussions on racism and White supremacy. Therefore, it is worth considering DiAngelo's theory in the next discussion around the psychological implications for White leaders when working with Black leaders.

These criticisms are valid concerns and help collectively discuss White fragility's nuances. However, White fragility as a concept has been helpful for many White people who seek to understand it better. White fragility can serve as an accountability tool that points White people to dive deeper into history and the complexities within their cultural worldview—elements of White fragility address the impact of intergenerational trauma. Despite White fragility being triggering, it will be necessary for leaders to consider the literature review I have given later in this chapter when addressing symptoms of intergenerational trauma for White people—cognitive bias, confirmation bias, and cognitive dissonance. In addition to White fragility, another contemporary topic worth addressing is Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT has become one of the most controversial and intriguing topics in the last two years, but it is worth examining the literature in more detail. We will examine CRT literature and criticism by individuals who are primarily Black leaders.

### **Critical Race Theory**

Critical race theory (CRT) emerged from a collection of activists and legal scholars engaged in studying and transforming the relationship between race, racism, and power.<sup>189</sup>

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189. McWhorter, *The Dehumanizing Condescension of White Fragility*.

Critical Race Theorists are made up of diverse people, scholars, and writers, and it began as a practice in law that rapidly grew beyond that discipline.<sup>190</sup> CRT is design for legal study concerning racism and its impact. CRT considers many of the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies discourses take up but places them in a broader perspective, including economics, history, setting, group, self-interest, emotions, and the unconscious.<sup>191</sup> Contrary to traditional civil rights discourse, which stresses incrementalism and step-by-step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law.<sup>192</sup> CRT scholars noticed challenges during the civil rights era of the 1960s and sought to understand why the civil rights movement struggled to advance. What are the basic tenets of CRT?

### **Basic Tenets of Critical Race Theory**

Critical race theorists describe four basic tenets that undergird the theory— 1) Interest convergence or material determinism, 2) Revisionist interpretation of history, 3) The critique of liberalism, and 4) Structural determinism. According to the UCLA School of Public Affairs, CRT is defined as follows: “CRT recognizes that racism is engrained in the fabric and system of American society. Individual racism need not exist to note that institutional racism is pervasive in the dominant culture. This is the analytical lens that CRT uses in examining existing power structures. CRT identifies that these power structures are based on White privilege and White supremacy, which both perpetuate the marginalization of people of color. CRT also rejects the

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190. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, (NYU Press, 2nd edition, 1984), 3.

191. Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 7.

192. Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 3.

traditions of liberalism and meritocracy.”<sup>193</sup> Legal discourse is the context of CRT, that seeks to examine the implications of racist practices within the legal system. In legal discourse, the law is neutral and colorblind; however, CRT challenges this legal “truth” by examining liberalism and meritocracy as a vehicle for self-interest, power, and privilege. CRT also recognizes that liberalism and meritocracy are often stories heard from those with wealth, power, and privilege.<sup>194</sup>

When considering these tenets and their implications, the reader should dive deeper into the history described in this chapter to understand better the movement’s examination and conclusions concerning the civil rights era. Racism, defined as the norm, or standard, is normalized within society and unavoidable. Interest in material determinism is why CRT scholars believe racism is ordinary, not aberrational, or “normal science.” Racism is viewed as the usual way society does business, the standard, everyday experience of most people of color in America.<sup>195</sup> CRT scholars argue that American society is grounded in a system of White-over-color ascendancy, which serves important purposes, both psychic and material, for the dominant group.<sup>196</sup> Ordinarity means that racism is difficult to address or cure because it is not acknowledged, which leads to color-blindness or “formal” conceptions of equality, expressed in rules that insist only on treatment that is the same across the board.<sup>197</sup> Delgado writes, “because

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193. Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 3-23.

194. Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 3-23.

195. UCLA School of Public Affairs, “What is Critical Race Theory?” (UCLA School of Public Affairs: Critical Race Studies, June 2009, Accessed July 28, 2021), [https://spacrs.wordpress.com/what-is-critical-race-theory/#\\_ftn1](https://spacrs.wordpress.com/what-is-critical-race-theory/#_ftn1).

196. Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 8.

197. Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 8-11.



racism advances the interest of both White elites (materially) and working-class Whites (physically), large segments of society have little incentive to eradicate racism.<sup>198</sup> Delgado argues that the 1954 *Brown v. The Board of Education* decision may have resulted more from the self-interest of elite Whites than from a desire to help Black people.<sup>199</sup>

The social construction thesis holds that race and race are social thought and relationship products.<sup>200</sup> These thoughts and relations are not objective, inherent, or fixed; they correspond to no biological or genetic reality. Instead, races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient.<sup>201</sup> Delgado thinks people with common origins share certain physical traits, such as skin color, physique, and hair texture. But these constitute only a tiny portion of their genetic endowment and have nothing to do with distinctly human, higher-order traits, such as personality, intelligence, and moral behavior.<sup>202</sup> When society ignores these scientific truths, it creates races and endows them with pseudo-permanent characteristics that affirm the efforts of critical race theory. The creation of race led to the development of different rationalizations and their consequences surrounding the idea that each race has its origins and ever-evolving history.<sup>203</sup> This ever-evolving history is the notion of intersectionality and anti-essentialism, in

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198. Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 8-11.

199. Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 9.

200. See chapter 2 for the *Brown vs. Board of Education* example and how Delgado believes it may have resulted more from the self-interest of elite Whites than from a desire to help Black people.

201. Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 8-23.

202. Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 1-11.

203. Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 1-11.

which no person has a single, easily stated, unitary identity (e.g., see pages 10-11 for specific examples).<sup>204</sup>

The idea of race is rooted in an understanding of race being a social construct. Those social constructs have produced racial hierarchies that determine who receive tangible benefits, including the best jobs, schools, and invitations to parties in people's homes.<sup>205</sup> Materialists point out that conquering nations universally demonize their subjects to feel better about exploiting them.<sup>206</sup> When further discussing materialism, CRT scholars believe,

The ebb and flow of racial progress and retrenchment require a careful look at conditions prevailing at different times in history. Circumstances change so that one group finds it possible to seize advantage or to exploit another. They do so and then form appropriate collective attitudes to rationalize what was done. Moreover, what is true for the subordination of minorities is also true for its relief: civil rights gains for communities of color coincide with the dictates of White self-interest. Little happens out of altruism alone.<sup>207</sup>

This perspective informs CRTs critique of liberalism and its implications. Delgado believes. many liberals believe in color blindness and neutral principles of constitutional law.<sup>208</sup> Liberals believe in equality for all persons regardless of their different histories or current situations, minimizing experiences.<sup>209</sup> Several examples will be explored later in this chapter when addressing the psychological and sociological implications. Critical race theorists see

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204. Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 9-11.

205. Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 9-11.

206. Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 21-38.

207. Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 22-54.

208. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2nd edition, 1984).

209. Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 26-42.

colorblindness as a hindrance in the progression of abolishing racism. Suppose racism is embedded in our thought processes and social structures as deeply as many critics believe. In that case, the “ordinary business” of society, the routines, practices, and institutions that we rely on to do the world’s work— will keep minorities in subordinate positions.<sup>210</sup> The solution then is for aggressive color-conscious efforts without dehumanizing individuals and mitigating their experiences. In other words, individuals must develop cultural intelligence and racial identity and seek policy reform that does not oppress people of color.

Consider how the government applauds affording everyone equality of opportunity but resists programs that assure equality of results, such as affirmative action within various organizations. CRTs' criticism of colorblindness is worth further exploration. The criticism further points to the importance of understanding Intersectionality within the CRT framework.

Intersectionality within CRT points to the multidimensionality of oppressions and recognizes that race alone cannot account for disempowerment. “Intersectionality means the examination of race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation, and how their combination plays out in various settings.”[1] This is an important tenet in pointing out that CRT is critical of the many oppressions facing people of color and does not allow for a one-dimensional approach of the complexities of our world.<sup>211</sup>

When individuals have a colorblind lens, it shapes how history and experiences are interpreted by the individual, which contributes to the development of cognitive biases. Questions that we will explore later in this chapter are: 1) Is CRT an ideology? 2) Is CRT an academic program/exercise? And 3) Is CRT a mood within the United States to help us better understand what is happening at large in society? With this overview of CRT, what are different writers saying about the implications and applications? This next section will examine biblical scholar

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210. Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 26-42.

211. Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 27.

Voddie Baucham's perspective on CRT. Baucham's voice has become popular in various evangelical denominations, churches, and platforms, and his perspective contributes to this discussion and is worth understanding.

### **Voddie Baucham**

Contrary to what many individuals assume, Black voices are not unified on race, ethnicity, and justice. Baucham is a Black pastor, author, and educator who claims to be a “fire-breathing, TULIP believing, five-point Calvinist.”<sup>212</sup> Respect for him runs deep within White evangelical environments, particularly within the Southern Baptist Convention, which was foundational in his formation. Baucham's area of expertise is cultural apologetics, where he articulates the validity and historicity of the Bible, the resurrection of Christ, or, more explicitly, teaching on “biblical manhood and womanhood.” However, White evangelicals have turned to Baucham to understand social justice, racism, and critical race theory over the last few years. Baucham uses Ethnic Gnosticism, a term used to explain the phenomenon of people believing that somehow because of one's ethnicity, one can know when something or someone is racist.<sup>213</sup> Ethnic Gnosticism informs Baucham's approach to the conversation of race and ethnicity and does inform his response to CRT.

In a sermon at Flat Creek Baptist Church in Gainesville, GA, Baucham describes his perspective on CRT. He begins by reviewing the four main principles of CRT based on his interpretation. He denounces the notion that racism is normalized within society and that

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212. UCLA School of Public Affairs, “What is Critical Race Theory?”

213. Voddie Baucham, *Ethnic Gnosticism* (2019, Access June 1, 2021), <https://founders.org/sermons/ethnic-gnosticism/>.

everything is racist.<sup>214</sup> Baucham does not believe that racism is normalized and embedded within systems; rather, racism is individualized, and individual racism should not be overlooked in the conversation of racism, ethnicity, and justice. In other words, Baucham accepts the dominant White evangelical view that sin is mostly individual in nature. Second, when addressing convergence theory, Baucham rebukes the idea that White people are condemned by racist ideas and how they benefit from their White ethnic identity. He thinks that CRT claims that White people cannot take righteous action against racism unless it converges with their interests. Third, Baucham believes that the “liberal” critique promotes anti-objectivity and scientific rationale. Lastly, he interprets structural determinism, or the social construction of knowledge, to eliminate individual responsibility concerning racism.<sup>215</sup>

Ultimately, Baucham believes that the differences are not centered around justice but rather on injustice because racism is structural and systemic. It is the difference between one group of people who view the case's evidence versus individuals who see the structural and systemic patterns that lead to injustices. For Baucham, people are too distracted with cultural terminology, theories, and methods, rather than believing that the Gospel is the solution to racism.<sup>216</sup> For Baucham, when Christians engage in discussions concerning anti-racism or CRT, they cling to a liberal and “Savior theology,” which is problematic for Christianity and the Church. He sees terms like “Christian hegemony, oppressor, and oppressed” as terms that need to

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214. Voddie Baucham, *Ethnic Gnosticism*, (2019).

215. Voddie Baucham, “*Critical Race Theory Says Everything is Racist*,” (February 25, 2021, Accessed July 23, 2021), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xuSMvIVtd0A>.

216. Stephanie Martin, “*Voddie Baucham: Why Critical Race Theory Is a Looming Catastrophe*,” Church Leaders, May 12, 2021, Accessed May 12, 2021), <https://churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/394150-voddie-baucham-critical-race-theory.html>.

be eradicated from the Christian vernacular because the redemptive work of Christ has redeemed humanity. According to Baucham, if you are oppressed and marginalized, your experience is not greater than White individuals who have not had a similar experience. There needs to be consistency across the board, and the voices of those deemed White should not be overlooked simply because they are White. Baucham believes that CRT seeks to elevate marginalized voices and that it translates into absolute truth based on systemic oppression, experiences, and racism.

With all this stated, Baucham believes that CRT is a demonic ideology and a religion without grace.<sup>217</sup> Hence social justice movements are built on a demonic ideology because it has origins in Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, and neo-Marxist successors in the Frankfurt School.<sup>218</sup> Baucham's main concern is how Christians adopt ideologies and theories such as CRT and anti-racism. He sees them as religious movements with their cosmology, saints, liturgy, and law.<sup>219</sup> Baucham affirms that Christians should be concerned with fighting injustice, condemning racism, and promoting equality of opportunities; however, they should never contradict and be the absolute source above Scripture.<sup>220</sup> He views CRT as objective truth, but there have been criticisms surrounding Baucham's interpretation and understanding of CRT over the last several months. He has been criticized for plagiarism and misquoting CRT in his book *Fault Lines*.

One prominent critique of Baucham comes from Joel McDurmon. McDurmon highlights the problems with Baucham's inserts and citations because a good portion of those sections is

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217. Martin, "Voddie Baucham: Why Critical Race Theory Is a Looming Catastrophe."

218. Dan Andros, "Voddie Baucham Jr. Sounds Off on CRT: 'Demonic Ideology,'" (Faithwire, June 18, 2021, Accessed August 24, 2021), <https://www.faithwire.com/2021/06/18/voddie-baucham-jr-sounds-off-on-crt-demonic-ideology/>.

219. See sources around the Frankfurt School.

220. UCLA School of Public Affairs, "What is Critical Race Theory?"

not Richard Delgado's actual words. Rather they are Baucham's additions. McDurmon highlights false citations, misinformation, and distortion of CRT.<sup>221</sup> For example, Baucham claimed that CRT teaches "Whites are incapable of righteous action on race and Storytelling/Narrative Reading is the way of Black forward knowledge vs. the Science/reason method of White people."<sup>222</sup> According to McDurmon, these are complete falsehoods for which Baucham needs accountability. McDurmon then claims, "To be redundantly clear: 1) these red sections are not Richard Delgado's words. Nowhere in the book Baucham cites do these words appear (in fact, nowhere in the book does the word righteous appear even once. Nowhere in any edition of the book have these words ever appeared. 2) These words or ideas appear nowhere in the entire corpus of the writing of Richard Delgado or his coauthor Jean Stefancic. (I have access to legal and academic search engines. I checked all their writings). 3) This is nowhere near a fair appraisal of anything Delgado wrote or meant." McDurmon concludes that Baucham is responsible for attributing false, twisted quotations to Delgado, making Delgado's position objectionable.<sup>223</sup>

Writer Tyler Huckabee affirms McDurmon's criticism of Baucham, and many religious organizations have had to come to grips with false narratives that have been taught. Despite CRT being controversial, its critics tend to either deliberately or unknowingly inflate this obscure corner of academic study with a lot of excess bogeymen and moral panic.<sup>224</sup> With this stated,

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221. UCLA School of Public Affairs, *"What is Critical Race Theory?"*

222. See, Baucham, Voddie, *Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe* (Washington, D.C.: Salem Books, 2021), 8-14.

223. Joel McDurmon, *"Voddie's Fault Lines Worse Than Before: Fake Quotations AND Plagiarism,"* (Lamb's Reign, June 30, 2021, Accessed August 4, 2021), <https://www.lamsreign.com/blog/voddies-fault-lines-worse-than-before-fake-quotations-and-plagiarism>.

224. McDurmon, *"Voddie's Fault Lines Worse Than Before: Fake Quotations AND Plagiarism."*

what is underneath the surface for those who strongly oppose CRT? Why do White evangelicals believe that CRT is a worldly ideology of evil that Christians should disengage with? Huckabee notes, “the belief that CRT and Intersectionality are problematic comes from a lack of understanding of the terms, and how conservatives and White evangelicals have positioned them as anti-faith—and more particularly, anti-Christian. Thus, while more people hear more—and hopefully learn more—about CRT, more are also opposing it because they believe their faith teaches them to do so. I suggest that an understanding of how this rhetoric works and the foundations that it is built upon is a start and should be included in any discussion or teaching going forward.”

Moreover, McDurmon believes it is imperative to consider the role of interpretation and leaders not fully comprehending the work of scholars addressing CRT. It was evident that before writing his book, Baucham held biases about the topic and did not fully articulate the purpose of CRT. Therefore, exhaustive research must be done regarding Baucham’s views and understanding of CRT, social justice, race, and ethnicity. Baucham’s ideas and understanding of CRT influence thousands of individuals, inevitably creating an opportunity for ideas to be affirmed that will ultimately result in intergenerational trauma if not corrected. Moreover, when inaccurate understandings of sensitive topics are not thoroughly researched and understood, it perpetuates chaos, fear, and disunity that contributes to the racial divide.

### **Summary**

CRT is a legal theory. In the last two years, CRT has become a controversial topic because many evangelicals believe it is designed to influence the American education system.

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225. Tyler Huckabee, “A Former Pastor’s Popular Anti-CRT Book Is Being Accused of Plagiarism and Misquoted Sources,” *Relevant Magazine*, August 3, 2021, accessed (August 24, 2021), <https://www.relevantmagazine.com/faith/church/a-former-pastors-popular-anti-crt-book-is-being-accused-of-plagiarism-and-fake-quotes/>.



CRT was designed to be an academic program and exercise in law. It offers a perspective for examining societal laws that intentionally discriminate and sustain racist practices within institutions. CRT is a mood within the United States that can help us better understand what is happening at large without becoming absolute and only one tool used to highlight racism. The criticism and noise surrounding CRT mirrors the same noise mentioned previously during the civil rights era. People believed that the civil rights movement threatened society and America. People claimed many civil rights leaders to be Marxists, Communists, and a threat to national security. Lastly, when people found new and creative ways to combat racism, it was met with criticism and outrage.<sup>225</sup> Conversations about White fragility and CRT are worth having within organizations because it unpacks the historical implications of trauma, beliefs, and ideologies that continue to divide American Christians. Many evangelicals view these ideologies as a threat on society, particularly within the educational system, which these theories are not designed to address— Rather, they serve as helpful tools and frameworks that individuals are free to consider when examining institutions and personal experiences. Moreover, it further highlights the impact of theology and biblical perspectives that exposes the racial divide between Black and White Christians.

Chapter four focuses on psychological and counseling literature and will further explore behaviors— PTSS, Cognitive Bias, Confirmation Bias, and Cognitive Dissonance. This thesis-project centers around Intergenerational Trauma, and it will serve as the umbrella for the next section. Understanding intergenerational trauma will help leaders comprehend what they may feel in discussions of racism, White supremacy, and injustice. Therefore, it is important to

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227. John Edgar Hoover, *The Communist Party and the Negro* (Federal Bureau of Investigation United States Department of Justice, 1956). The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, *Communism* (Stanford, CA: King Institute, Accessed July 1, 2021), <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/communism>.

remember these topics for chapters six and seven when exploring interviews with leaders. In chapter four, I will focus on the role of intergenerational trauma, transgenerational trauma, cognitive bias, confirmation bias, and cognitive dissonance. For Black leaders, I will concentrate on Transgenerational Trauma and Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome and how it manifests when triggered by intergenerational trauma. These theories create an opportunity for Black leaders to understand better themselves when trauma manifests when working within predominantly White organizations. For White leaders, transgenerational trauma and signs of PTSS creates an opportunity for them to understand behaviors that manifest when Black leaders are triggered within their organizations.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Psychological and Counseling Literature Review

"If you're treated a certain way, you become a certain kind of person. If certain things are described to you as being real, they're real for you whether they're real or not."

-James Baldwin

### Intergenerational Trauma

This chapter will review various psychological and counseling literature to help leaders understand the impact of intergenerational trauma and its effects on leaders. We will examine how this literature applies to leaders, which we will later explore in chapters five through eight. It is helpful that leaders identify the root of intergenerational trauma due to slavery by defining trauma and its various effects. The term trauma has grown to be more comprehensive as it seeks to explain the distress caused by severe illness, the death of a loved one, natural disasters, or community violence.<sup>1</sup> Trauma manifests when an individual is triggered, consciously or unconsciously, which stems from a traumatic event that previously occurred in their life. Judith Herman writes:

The traumatic moment becomes encoded in an abnormal form of memory, which breaks spontaneously into consciousness, both as flashbacks during waking states and as traumatic nightmares during sleep. Small, seemingly insignificant reminders can also evoke these memories, which often return with all the vividness and emotional force of the original event.<sup>2</sup>

Herman's perspective speaks to the lack of awareness individuals have when experiencing repetitive compulsion— a traumatic re-enactment of events as an attempt to resolve the

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1. W. Copeland, G. Geeler, A. Angold, & J. Costello, *Traumatic events, and posttraumatic stress in childhood*. Archives of General Psychiatry, 64(5), 577-584. N. Rodriguez, A. Steinberg, & R. Pynoos, *UCLA PTSD index for DSM- IV instrument information: Child version, parent version, adolescent version*, (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Trauma Psychiatry Service, 1999).

2. Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2015), 37.

experience. In addition, trauma re-enactment is a repetitive compulsion attempt to repress memories that resist our consciousness of them, taking shelter in an autonomous and dissociated re-enactment.<sup>3</sup> In other words, it reveals that repetitive compulsion is an unconscious repetition, usually spontaneous and unsuccessful when attempting to heal the trauma.<sup>4</sup> Herman forms this conclusion from the theory of Mardi Horowitz's completion principle— in which human beings attempt to process information to update the inner schemata of the self and the world.<sup>5</sup> It is common for individuals who have experienced trauma to avoid tensions and conflict, reliving and experiencing more trauma.

The etymology of trauma has its roots in ancient Greece, where it was used about soldiers wounded in battle and meant to wound or pierce.<sup>6</sup> In the 1970s, psychologists began to examine returning war and rape victims to understand the impact of trauma better.<sup>7</sup> However, trauma research was exclusively focused on individuals in the military who experienced traumatic events beyond their home community and disregarded the experiences of traumatic events in daily life, including their influence on children.<sup>8</sup> In the context of PTSD, the DSM-IV-TR or American Psychological Association defines trauma as:

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3. H. Lorenz, & M. Watkins, *Silenced knowing, forgotten springs: Paths to healing in the wake of colonialism* (Bethel, ME: Paper presented at the National Training Laboratory Institute Annual Conference, 2001, 11. Accessed August 17, 2021), [http://www.academia.edu/29561218/Silenced\\_Knowings\\_Forgotten\\_Springs\\_Paths\\_to\\_Healing\\_in\\_the\\_Wake\\_of\\_Colonialism\\_1](http://www.academia.edu/29561218/Silenced_Knowings_Forgotten_Springs_Paths_to_Healing_in_the_Wake_of_Colonialism_1).

4. Sylvia Zofia Hartowicz and California Institute of Integral Studies, *Bringing Intergenerational Trauma and Resilience to Consciousness: The Journey of Healing and Transformation for the Wounded Healer Exploring Ancestral Legacy* (California Institute of Integral Studies, Dissertation, 2018).

5. Hartowicz and California Institute of Integral Studies, 2018.

6. Hartowicz and California Institute of Integral Studies, 2018.

7. W. Copeland, G. Geeler, A. Angold, & J. Costello, 577-584.

8. Elie Karam and Michela Bou Ghosn, "Psychosocial consequences of war Among civilian population" *"Current Opinion in Psychiatry,"* 2003, v. 16, 413-419.

An extreme traumatic stressor involving direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity; witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person' or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate (Criterion A). The person's response to the event must involve intense fear, helplessness, or horror, or in children, the response must involve disorganized or agitated behavior (Criterion A2).<sup>9</sup>

Over the years, trauma research on military individuals and youth has expanded. Studies revealed that trauma exposure is found in children beginning at age five. This trauma is due to interpersonal victimization caused by psychological maltreatment, sexual maltreatment/assault, abuse, neglect, and domestic violence.<sup>10</sup> How does trauma impact individuals beyond their exposure? Individuals tend to relive the traumatic event, encounter flashbacks, avoid trauma-related things, become psychologically numb, and become hyper-vigilant, anxious, or irritable.<sup>11</sup> According to the American Psychological Association, roughly 30% of individuals exposed to potentially traumatic experiences will develop PTSD, which negatively impacts a variety of areas— interpersonal, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral.<sup>12</sup>

Complex trauma occurs repeatedly and escalates throughout its duration.<sup>13</sup> The following statement can further understand complex trauma: "Individuals exposed to trauma over a variety of time spans and developmental periods suffered from a variety of psychological problems not

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9. American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th edition), (Washington, D.C., 2000), 22.

10. National Child Traumatic Stress Network, "White paper on the Complex Trauma in Children and Adolescents," Complex Trauma Task Force, 2003, accessed (August 15, 2021), <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/complex-trauma-children-and-adolescents>.

11. American Psychological Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (4th edition), (Washington, D.C., 1994).

12. American Psychological Association, "Intergenerational Trauma," 88.

13. C.A. Courtois, *Complex Trauma, Complex Reactions: Assessment and Treatment* (Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training, 2004), 41, 412-425.

included in the diagnosis of PTSD, including depression, anxiety, self-hatred, dissociation, substance abuse, self-destructive and risk-taking behaviors, revictimization, problems with interpersonal and intimate relationships (including parenting), medical and somatic concerns, and despair (Diagnostic conceptualization of complex trauma)."<sup>14</sup> Traumatic transmission across generations often occurs unconsciously and effectively, and the trauma goes beyond those directly impacted.<sup>15</sup> New generations that follow the traumatic events experience intergenerational trauma by inhabiting the past, further reproducing the trauma, and transmitting it to the next generation.<sup>16</sup> Consider children of Holocaust survivors and their children. Studies of the Holocaust survivors reveal some unconscious processes at work that keep ghosts of the past alive.<sup>17</sup>

Based on what I have presented thus far, it is fair to assume that trauma can be inherited and passed down from generation to generation. The unconscious drive to relive past events could be at work when unresolved trauma is transmitted from previous generations.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, parents may relive traumatic events and become emotionally detached and numb because trauma is embedded into their experiences, and many psychologists believe it may be genetic. However, typically survivors, mainly enslaved survivors, were not capable of remembering, mourning, or symbolizing the trauma in a way that allowed for healing. As a result, these unresolved traumas

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14. C.A. Courtois, *Complex Trauma, Complex Reactions: Assessment and Treatment*.

15. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, *Breaking Intergenerational Cycles of Repetition: A Global Dialogue on Historical Trauma and Memory* (Toronto, ON: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2016).

16. Gobodo-Madikizela, *Breaking Intergenerational Cycles of Repetition: A Global Dialogue on Historical Trauma and Memory*.

17. Bergmann and Jucovy, 1982; Auerhahn and Laub, 1998; Felsen, 1998; Kogan, 1995; Herzon, 1982).

18. M. Wolynn, *It didn't start with you: How inherited family trauma shapes who we are and how to end the cycle* (New York, NY: Viking, 2016).

are then transmitted to future generations.<sup>19</sup> Consider the enslaved freed in 1865 and expected to immediately integrate into American society without appropriately addressing hundreds of years of oppression and trauma. Suppose the experiences of the enslaved seemed overwhelming, unbearable, or unimaginable. In that case, it becomes the next generation's responsibility to heal the trauma transmitted to ensure the cycle does not continue perpetuating. In theory, this would be ideal. However, research suggests that this is not the case for many Black people. Mark Wolynn calls this the Completion Principle and states:

Even if a person who suffered the original trauma has died, even if his story lies submerged in years of silence, fragments of life experience, memory, and body sensations can live on, as if reaching out from the past to find resolution in the minds and bodies of those living in the present.<sup>20</sup>

Wolynn believes the generations that experienced the trauma by unpacking why it becomes ancestral healing is necessary. In addition, other scholars believe the characteristics of survivor syndrome include stress, self-doubt, problems with aggression, and several psychological and interpersonal relationship problems with family members and others. Understanding these characteristics within individuals who inherit intergenerationally brings understanding to behaviors individuals may exhibit when triggered. Yael Danieli further explains intergenerational trauma by writing the following:

The intergenerational perspective reveals the impact of trauma, its contagion, and repeated patterns within the family. It may help explain certain behaviors patterns, symptoms, roles, and values adopted by family members, family sources of vulnerability as well as resilience and strength, and job choices (following in the footsteps of a relative, a namesake) through the generations. Viewed from a family systems perspective, what happened in one generation will affect what happens in the older or younger generation, though the actual behavior may take a variety of forms. Within an intergenerational

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19. Angela Mary Connolly, *Healing the wounds of our fathers: Intergenerational Trauma, Memory, Symbolization and Narrative* (Journal of Analytical Psychology), 56, 607-626.

20. Mark Wolynn, *It didn't start with you: How inherited family trauma shapes who we are and how to end the cycle* (New York, NY: Viking, 2016), 1-2.

context, the trauma and its impact may be passed down as the family legacy even to children born after the trauma.<sup>21</sup>

Suppose individuals impacted by intergenerational trauma live from an unconscious state and reenact behaviors and ideologies without resolving the trauma. In that case, it does affect their lives, experiences, beliefs, ideologies, and working relationships. Examining various forms of trauma and seeking to understand individuals and their social location within society can help leaders build and maintain a diverse organization. Moreover, understanding intergenerational trauma can help leaders when there are tensions and conflict within their organization between Black and White leaders based on trauma transmitted. Intergenerational trauma also creates an opportunity for leaders to understand better how they may be impacted by different cultures and their social location within the traumatic experience. In other words, if Black leaders are affected by the traumatic experience of chattel slavery through their ancestors, then White leaders are equally impacted by the trauma of chattel slavery, based on their ancestral role. Considering racial tensions and divisions politically, socially, economically, and theologically, it is safe to assume that the traumatic events of chattel slavery were transmitted from generation to generation through politics, economics, and theology.

How does chattel slavery continue to impact White and Black individuals? Slavery is often addressed by acknowledging the brutality and cruelty toward Black people. However, I wanted to understand better how slavery impacted ancestral enslavers, enslaved, and today's families. Through slavery, What legacy was left behind? What theology was passed down? What views of Black and White people were taught? How does this impact our understanding of unity, particularly within the American Church?

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21. Yael Danieli, *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma* (New York, NY: Plenum Press, 1998), 9.



Consider a White enslaver who owns a Black enslaved. They have children approximately at the same time. Due to the Black mother's fair skin, she is afforded privileges to work inside the plantation, with the primary responsibility of raising her children and the children of the plantation owner. Her child and the plantation child are raised together, primarily because the Black child is not old enough to work in the field until the Black child becomes old enough to work the fields. Around the age of 6 or so, the Black child is old enough to work the fields, then separated from the White child they grew up with on the plantation. Either the child goes to the field or is sold into an auction, thus perpetuating the cycle of chattel slavery, and defining their role within society. However, the question I wanted to understand is, "How did slavery impact both children and their understanding of each other?"

Although both Black and White children never lived in the same house, there is no denying that plantations were extremely diverse, with Black people being the majority. Plantations were the most integrated environments in America for centuries, but when children were separated, what did parents teach their children about children of the opposite race, their mothers, and fathers? How did slavery, and the separation of children from their parents, impact their understanding of the world and the role that child plays within the larger society? When evangelicals advocate for children having healthy home environments, with fathers in the home, how does the history of slavery and intergenerational trauma impact families? Despite the enslaved never processing the trauma endured from chattel slavery, how did White people unpack the trauma of slavery? Lazarre states this when addressing White people, "We cannot erase centuries of slavery, discrimination, and bigotry, but we can begin the process of respectful, truthful remembering. What sort of psychological distortion must occur in us not

knowing the reality of this immense subjugation?<sup>22</sup> What keeps contemporary White Americans from "knowing" that immense subjugation is inextricable from what keeps them from facing, mourning, and engaging in a reparative relationship with it.<sup>23</sup> If history is consistent, it is safe to assume that trauma from slavery was never addressed, and America never reckoned with the impact on Americans and society at large.

According to Ryan Parker, Slavery is deeply implicated in the intergenerational transmission of trauma, including the traumatic construction of the self in acts of domination and the continuation of privilege and or power that is a deep infrastructure of any White person's life.<sup>24</sup> Thus, reconstruction and Jim Crow segregation.<sup>25</sup> Abraham F. Citron summarizes the issue:

White-centeredness is not the reality of [the White child's] world, but he is under the illusion that it is. It is thus impossible for him to deal accurately or adequately with the universe of human and social relationships. Children who develop in this way are robbed of opportunities for emotional and intellectual growth, stunted in the basic development of the self so that they cannot experience or accept humanity. This is a personality outcome in which it is quite possible to build into children a great feeling and compassion for animals and unconscious fear and rejection of different human beings. Such persons are by no means prepared to live and move with either appreciation or effectiveness in today's world.<sup>26</sup>

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22. Ryan Nelson Parker, *"Slavery in the White psyche: how contemporary White Americans remember and making meaning of slavery: a project based upon independent investigation"* (2010), Masters Thesis, Smith College, Northampton, MA). <https://scholarworks.smith.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2181&context=theses>

23. Parker, *"Slavery in the White psyche: how contemporary White Americans remember and making meaning of slavery: a project based upon independent investigation."*

24. Parker, *"Slavery in the White psyche: how contemporary White Americans remember and making meaning of slavery: a project based upon independent investigation."*

25. See Children, Louise Derman-Sparks, Carol Tanaka Higa, and Bill Sparks, *"Race and Racism: How Race Awareness Develops,"* (2012) [https://www.teachingforchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/ec\\_childrenracism\\_english.pdf](https://www.teachingforchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/ec_childrenracism_english.pdf).

26. See Ann Beuf, *Red Children in White America* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Philadelphia Press, 1977), Kenneth Clark, *Prejudice and Your Child* (Beacon Press, 1955), W. Cross, *Black Family and Black Identity: A Literature Review* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1977), [https://www.teachingforchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/ec\\_childrenracism\\_english.pdf](https://www.teachingforchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/ec_childrenracism_english.pdf).

Trauma from slavery has impacted Black and White leaders. The next section speaks directly to how individuals partake in collective memory and how individuals socially learn by adapting and re-enacted modeled behaviors. Thomas Jefferson wrote about this in 1781 in *Notes on the State of Virginia*:

The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other. Our children see this and learn to imitate it, for man is an imitative animal. This quality is the germ of all education in him. From his cradle to his grave, he is learning to do what he sees others do. [...] The 3 parent storms, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath, puts on the same airs in the circle of smaller slaves, gives a loose to his worst of passions, and thus nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny, cannot but be stamped by it with odious peculiarities. The man must be a prodigy who can retain his manners and morals undepraved by such circumstances.<sup>27</sup> (1781-1782, p. 289)

Despite the effects of slavery being considered by Jefferson, White Americans are the heirs of these children Jefferson mentions. Yet, there seems to be a level of denial and further exploration concerning the impact of intergenerational trauma.<sup>28</sup> Two unique concepts are worth exploring in greater detail— Collective Memory and Social Learning Theory (SLT).

James Baldwin states this explicitly—"People are trapped in history, and history is trapped in them."<sup>29</sup> I believe Baldwin's statement connects to two different concepts of collective memory. Jeffrey Olick refers to collective phenomena *sui generis* through differences and relations between an individualist and collectivist understandings of collective memory. The

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27. Ryan Nelson Parker, *"Slavery in the White psyche: how contemporary White Americans remember and making meaning of slavery: a project based upon independent investigation."* Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1781-1782), 289. Retrieved from <https://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/JefVirg.html>.

28. Parker, *"Slavery in the White psyche: how contemporary White Americans remember and making meaning of slavery: a project based upon independent investigation."*

29. James Baldwin, *The Price of a Ticket* (London, UK: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 65.

individualist is open to psychological considerations, including neurological and cognitive factors. However, individualist neglect technologies of memory other than the brain and how cognitive and even neurological patterns are constituted in part by a genuinely social process.<sup>30</sup> The collectivist emphasizes public and personal memory's social and cultural frameworks but neglects how psychological dynamics partly include those processes.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, drawing on the seminal work of Maurice Halbwachs' on Collective Memory, Ron Eyerman writes:

Memory is always group memory, both because the individual is derivative of some collectivity, family, and community, and also because a group is solidified and becomes aware of itself through continuous reflection upon and recreation of a distinctive, shared memory. Individual identity is said to be negotiated within this collectively shared past. Thus, while there is always a unique, biographical memory to draw upon, it is described as always rooted in a collective history.<sup>32</sup>

Collective memory molds the present reality for individuals because it is the framework and discourse, the lens through which the present is rendered knowable.<sup>33</sup> Mistal writes: "collective memory reflects the past and shapes present reality by providing people with understandings and symbolic frameworks that enable them to make sense of the world."<sup>34</sup> Scholars also believe that memory shifts based upon present needs and strategically forgets based upon individual circumstances. Eyerman meticulously explores how slavery has been a critical symbol and cite of memory for African American collective identities—"It was slavery, whether or not one had experienced it, that defined one's identity as an African American, it was why you, an African,

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30. J. K. Olick, *Collective Memory: The Two Cultures*, (*Sociological Theory*, 1999), 17(3), 333–348. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/370189>. See Appendix J.

31. Olick, *Collective Memory: The Two Cultures*, 333–348. See Appendix J.

32. Ron Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 6. See Appendix J.

33. Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the forge of national memory* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2000). See Appendix J.

34. Barbara Misztal, *Theories of social remembering* (Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press, 2003), 13.

were here, in America."<sup>35</sup> Moreover, Eyerman believes collective African American identity has remained rooted in a symbolic relationship with slavery throughout the twentieth century, which I believe is connected to Black ecclesiology. There is extensive research concerning collective memory, but another theory worth mentioning briefly is the Social Learning Theory (SLT).

Albert Bandura was a professor at Stanford University. He taught psychology and developed Social Learning Theory—a comprehensive theory of human behavior that outlines a theoretical framework demonstrating how people are agents in their environments, acting intentionally to bring about desired outcomes and not simply reacting to environmental stimuli.<sup>36</sup> Bandura's theory stresses observational learning, imitation, and modeling based on unique environments. SLT uses several models like the Reciprocal Causation Model— a continuous interaction between behaviors, personal factors, and environment.<sup>37</sup> The behavior factor addresses complexity, duration, and skill.<sup>38</sup> The personal factor addresses cognition— self-efficacy, motives, and personality. Self-efficacy is determined by how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave.<sup>39</sup> The environment factor addresses the situation, roles, models, and relationships impacting individual experiences. Bandura does not suggest that the three factors within reciprocal causation make equal contributions to behaviors; rather, these are tools designed to be used when seeking to understand individuals. Bandura's breakthrough came

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35. Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity*, 6.

36. Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Prentice-Hall Series in Social Learning Theory, 1977).

37. Bandura, *Social Learning Theory*, 9-31.

38. Bandura, *Social Learning Theory*, 9-31.

39. Albert Bandura, *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control* (New York, NY: Worth Publishers; 1st Edition, 1997). See Appendix K.

when he initiated a doll study in 1961 called the Bobo Doll Study.<sup>40</sup> SLT is worth exploring because the key idea for social cognitive learning is that people learn from watching the behaviors of others and the consequences that directly impact individuals. Another way of stating this is by understanding the process of observational learning, which factors in the individuals' attention, retention, reproduction, and production. If we consider these two theories, how does it shape the experiences of trauma transmitted from generation to generation? How do collective memory and SLT impact beliefs and experiences caused by transgenerational trauma and its effects on Black leaders?

### **Transgenerational Trauma**

I suggest that transgenerational trauma creates an opportunity for leaders to understand the effects of intergenerational trauma on Black leaders. Transgenerational trauma is closely related to intergenerational trauma. Transgenerational trauma is when parents' experiences affect the development of their children and sometimes their grandchildren.<sup>41</sup> Intergenerational trauma and transgenerational trauma are related but differ slightly. Intergenerational trauma results from the collective experience of a community or generation— consider genocide, economic depression, slavery, or war.<sup>42</sup> Collective trauma plays a vital role in understanding transgenerational trauma. It is the psychological distress that a group, usually an entire culture, community, or other large groups of people, experiences in response to shared trauma.<sup>43</sup>

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40. Saul McLeod, *Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory* (Simple Psychology, 2016), <https://www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html>.

41. Allaya Cooks–Campbell, “*What is transgenerational trauma and how does it affect our families?*” BetterUp (Blog), January 5, 2022, [betterup.com/blog/transgenerational-trauma](https://betterup.com/blog/transgenerational-trauma).

42. Cooks–Campbell, *What is transgenerational trauma and how does it affect our families?*

43. Cooks–Campbell, “*Collective trauma: Developing resilience in the aftermath,*” BetterUp, (Blog), November 24, 2021, <https://www.betterup.com/blog/collective-trauma?hsLang=en>.

Transgenerational trauma has been identified in the descendants of slaves, refugees, and children of Holocaust survivors.<sup>44</sup> In addition to various impacts on communities, it impacts society at large, leading to catalysts for policy and national sentiment changes.<sup>45</sup> Transgenerational trauma has severe consequences on mental health, trust, and safety within individuals because the legacy of trauma is the glue.<sup>46</sup>

When an individual gets impacted by transgenerational trauma, the traumatic event does not necessarily impact them, and they do not need to be directly for it to impact them generationally. There is evidence connecting transgenerational trauma to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which can affect how they handle stressors and relate as caregivers.<sup>47</sup> Symptoms of intergenerational trauma include— lack of trust, anger, frustration, insecurity, poor self-esteem, anxiety, and depression.<sup>48</sup> These symptoms directly impact children, whether motivated by fear or protection, if not addressed. Trauma affects how someone's parents and parenting affects how a child thinks and behaves into adulthood, barring intervention.<sup>49</sup> There is extensive research concerning the transmission process of transgenerational trauma, mainly through epigenetics. Epigenetics is the study of how the transmission of information from one generation to the next affects offspring's genes without altering the primary structure of DNA.<sup>50</sup>

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44. Cooks–Campbell, *“What is transgenerational trauma and how does it affect our families?”*

45. Cooks–Campbell, *“Collective trauma: Developing resilience in the aftermath.”*

46. Cooks–Campbell, *“What is transgenerational trauma and how does it affect our families?”*

47. Cooks–Campbell, *“What is transgenerational trauma and how does it affect our families?”*

48. Cooks–Campbell, *“What is transgenerational trauma and how does it affect our families?”*

49. Sheri Jacobson, *“What is Transgenerational Trauma?”* Harley Therapy, (Counseling Blog), July 27, 2017, <https://www.harleytherapy.co.uk/counselling/what-is-transgenerational-trauma.htm>.

50. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America’s Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing* (Milwaukie, OR: Uptone Press, 2017), 20-24.

Scientists, including senior lecturer at MIT Tara Swart, affirm the idea that Epigenetics is how your environment influences your genes. Swart states the following in one of her lectures to Fast Company:

The two most famous studies are about Holocaust survivors, so people who became pregnant around that time, and then people who became pregnant just before, during, or after the famine, which was in the Netherlands around the same time. Those studies showed that people in starvation or stress just before they got pregnant had either switched on or switched off certain stress genes; the baby was born with a different stress threshold than its mother's genes would have normally given it.<sup>51</sup>

Understanding epigenetics demonstrates the impact of trauma on individuals and how trauma impacts their experiences, beliefs, and behaviors. For this project, I suggest that transgenerational trauma demonstrates behaviors when Black leaders are triggered within predominantly White organizations. In addition, I suggest that leaders demonstrate signs of Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome— ever-present anger, vacant esteem, or racial socialization.

### **Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome**

Post-traumatic slave syndrome is a condition that exists when a population has experienced intergenerational trauma due to centuries of slavery and continues to experience oppression and institutionalized racism.<sup>52</sup> When it comes to PTSS, DeGruy suggests that there lies a belief, whether real or imagined, that the benefits of society in which Black people live are not accessible to Black people.<sup>53</sup> DeGruy suggests that PTSS is a syndrome, a pattern of behavior caused by various and specified circumstances stemming from physical and psychological enslavement passed down from African to African American slaves to future generations of

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51. V. Giang, *How Your Grandparents' Lives Affect Your Resilience to Stress* (Fast Company Business and Technology, April 22, 2015), 1.

52. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 105.

53. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 46.



offspring.<sup>54</sup> PTSS is further demonstrated as everyday microaggressions and various forms of oppression increase, connected to the absence of opportunity to access the benefits and rights available in society.<sup>55</sup> Research indicates that White and Black leaders have all been impacted by forms of PTSS. DeGruy further describes syndrome as a pattern of behaviors brought about by specific circumstances, intergenerational trauma, and continued oppression.<sup>56</sup> DeGruy highlights the power of belief and its influence over bodies, perspective, memories, cognition, emotions, and expectations.

It is undeniable that there are various beliefs that Black and White people have towards each race. According to various scholars, many Black people still believe that White people mean them harm; they are medical experiments and case studies for academic research. DeGruy believes that beliefs like this shaped the mind in a way that becomes paralyzing, fearing, and doubtful, which keeps Black people from believing in their potential. Beliefs can either work in your favor or work against you. It can further affirm a state of paralysis for many Black individuals due to trauma, oppression, and negative experiences. DeGruy identifies three categories associated with PTSS: vacant esteem, ever-present anger, and racist socialization. These categories will be further examined; however, it is recommended that leaders read these categories with intergenerational trauma, transgenerational trauma, collective memory, and SLT in mind. Vacant esteem is the first category DeGruy uses to describe what Black people may face when trauma manifest. Vacant esteem can play a role in understanding how Black people feel when they encounter transgenerational trauma.

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54. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 46.

55. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 46-67.

56. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 105.

## Vacant Esteem

Vacant esteem is connected to self-esteem, which is our judgment concerning our worth and value.<sup>57</sup> Vacant esteem in terms of PTSS is connected to Black individuals' beliefs about themselves and Black individuals believing they have little to no worth. Self-esteem is connected to self-confidence and self-efficacy and the desire for individuals to have healthy views of themselves. DeGruy elaborates on healthy self-esteem because it results from an accurate and honest assessment of one's worth, worth being the degree to which one contributes.<sup>58</sup> She explains the various forms of self-esteem and its contribution spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, and material, which help individuals improve their quality of life.<sup>59</sup> Vacant esteem is often exacerbated by a societal and group pronouncement of inferiority.<sup>60</sup> Vacant esteem results from three aspects of influence: society, community, and family. She describes the three aspects of influence, stating:

Society influences us through its institutions, laws, policies, and media. The communities in which we live influence us through establishing norms and encouraging conformity to society at large. Our families influence us through the ways in which we are raised and groomed to take our place, as our parents see it, in the community and society. When these influences all promote a disparaging and limiting identity to which we believe we are confined, vacant esteem can be the result. It is important to note that vacant esteem is a belief about one's worth, not a measure of one's actual worth. Vacant esteem, being a symptom of PTSS, is transmitted from generation to generation through the family, community, and society.<sup>61</sup>

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57. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 103-115.

58. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 107.

59. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 107-118.

60. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 129.

61. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 109.

When explaining vacant esteem symptoms, DeGruy believes that if parents have little or no value, it reflects itself in behaviors that can instill a similar belief in their children.<sup>62</sup>

Considering a community perspective, groups of people establish neutral and unspoken beliefs about their members' worth, beliefs that are reflected in the community's standards, and values regarding acceptable behavior, educational attainment, and professional possibilities.<sup>63</sup> DeGruy believes these standards and values influence what individuals choose to achieve, pursue, or accomplish. However, problems can occur within the community when individuals seek external behaviors, educational attainments, and professional possibilities. DeGruy uses Booker T. Washington's vision for the appropriate role of African Americans in American society to be tradesmen as an example for vacant esteem. Washington's belief was primarily influenced by his southern heritage, influence, and community, but it was not widely accepted. In the mid-20th century, the family, taking their cue from the community, supported this notion, traditionally sending their girls off to become teachers and nurses while keeping their boys at home to learn crafts and trades involving manual labor.<sup>64</sup>

Lastly, DeGruy believes that society contributes to transgenerational trauma and vacant esteem. This is demonstrated through discriminatory laws, institutions, policies, and media. DeGruy highlights how Black people continue to be disproportionately represented in our penal institutions while living in neighborhoods with dysfunctional schools that are intentionally segregated and lack adequate revenue to sustain them.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, Mehersa Baradaran unpacks

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62. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 109.

63. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 109-121.

64. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 109.

65. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 109-121.

the racial wealth gap, how banks charge higher interest rates on homes and auto loans, and how difficult it is for Black people to get small business loans.<sup>66</sup> These statistical facts are demonstrated in Richard Rothstein's book, *The Color of Law*, and Mehera Baradaran's work.<sup>67</sup> To further demonstrate the societal impact, consider the role of the media. Many Black people are depicted as criminals, disadvantaged, academically deficient, and sexually promiscuous.<sup>68</sup> But what are PTSS signs of vacant esteem, and what leads to vacant esteem?

### **Signs of Vacant Esteem**

DeGruy gives an example of Carl and Dominic getting into an argument, and it escalates, with Carl pulling out a gun on Dominic. With the gun pointed at Dominic's face, Carl pulls the trigger, but the gun jammed. Dominic does not move or respond when the gun is jammed on three separate occasions. However, Carl shoots Dominic in the head on the next attempt, and Dominic is rushed to the hospital. It is easy to read this example and point to vacant esteem issues due to Black-on-Black violence or individuals not being upstanding citizens. This example highlights what is deemed normative for Black individuals, particularly young boys. Why wouldn't Dominic be afraid of Carl pulling out the gun?

According to DeGruy, many Black boys do not expect to live long and promising lives based on their experiences, environment, and circumstances. These young men do not believe there is hope or a future for them, so what would be the incentive for a living? Many young Black people have seen more poverty, violence, and degradation than necessary, and they are not afraid to live in that reality, which simultaneously demonstrates a sign of resilience.<sup>69</sup> Many

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66. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 109-121.

67. See Mehera Baradaran's *The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap*

68. Baradaran, *The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap*.

Black individuals feel the weight of the entire community, thus the desire to make it out through various avenues like sports and entertainment. DeGruy argues that the child of such parenting will have anxiety, hyper-vigilance, and possible low self-esteem, which are signs of various forms of PTSD, anxiety disorders, and transgenerational trauma.<sup>70</sup>

Another form of Vacant esteem is demonstrated by Black people when they undermine the achievements of other Black people. Vacant esteem reveals that it is difficult for Black people to celebrate the success of other Black people, particularly those who are not considered to be closer to specific socioeconomic levels.<sup>71</sup> In other words, there are codes, banter, beliefs, rituals, and shared experiences that have defined Blackness in America. DeGruy thinks the lack of appreciation for peers' achievements and feeling the weight and responsibility for the entire community indicate vacant esteem.<sup>72</sup> DeGruy believes that despite these perspectives, Black people need to take responsibility, and ownership, of irrational and stigmatizing behaviors that impact self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-efficacy. The next section will address the impact of ever-present anger among Black people. Ever-present anger is connected to Black individuals lacking self-awareness and esteem, which manifests in anger when they do not feel valued.

### **Ever-Present Anger**

DeGruy seeks to answer and address the following questions: why is anger such a large part of the experience of most African Americans? Are African Americans inherently violent people? DeGruy believes that anger is often in response to blocked goals, frustration, fear of

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69. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 110.

70. Sheri Jacobson, "What is Transgenerational Trauma?" Harley Therapy, (Counseling Blog), July 27, 2017, <https://www.harleytherapy.co.uk/counselling/what-is-transgenerational-trauma.htm>.

71. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 110.

72. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 111.

failure, and misunderstanding. James R. Samuels explains why African Americans become angry. "In its simplest form, anger is the normal emotional response to a blocked goal. Often, if a person's goal remains blocked over time, they will begin to consider the possibility of failure and so experience fear, and when we are fearful, we also lash out in anger."<sup>73</sup> DeGruy gives an example of a Black executive who worked hard for promotion by going over and beyond and excelling in all aspects of his job.<sup>74</sup> His goal to be promoted was blocked, and his response was anger; as a result, he was more determined to get the promotion by increasing productivity. However, he was denied again when the next round of promotions was handed out. Within this example, DeGruy points out how initially, his anger fueled his determination, but after realizing that it still led to a denial of a promotion, the result intensified the anger, potentially escalating and leading to hostility.<sup>75</sup> Here, hostility becomes the fuel for the anger, making the executives' countenance visible. The anger becomes a form of rebellion, and then the focus shifts from promotion to the supervisor.<sup>76</sup> Inwardly conflicted, the executive understands that if he were to change his mindset and defer to the original state, it would be counterproductive, leading the executive to suppress and stuff their feelings.<sup>77</sup>

DeGruy further elaborates on the Black executive's feelings and how they lead to various coping strategies that allow him to resolve them.<sup>78</sup> Feelings could dissipate, appear periodically when triggered, or reappear upon the next conversation concerning promotion. DeGruy believes

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73. James R. Samuel, *Blocked Goals* (Portland, OR: Mentat Group, Public Talk, 2004).

74. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 60-132.

75. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 113.

76. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 113.

77. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 113-116.

78. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 113-116.

that it can be difficult for significant others to understand, and their attempts are often not enough to subdue the anger. The reality is that the Black executive is in an unsafe environment, which contributes to his emotional state of anger. If there are frequent denials of promotion, how should the Black executive respond? There is no denying the impact of Black individuals not being promoted to advance themselves economically, their families, communities, and society lead to extreme frustrations, anger, and vacant esteem.

DeGruy highlights that the dominant culture consistently blocks significant goals for African Americans and how African Americans integrate into the larger society.<sup>79</sup> She highlights William Grier and Price Cobb's book, *Black Rage*, and how it reveals the failure of America to successfully integrate its Black citizenry into the social and political fabric of America.<sup>80</sup> In general, America has prevented Black citizens' fair and equal access, thus leading to real and lasting anger and rage within the community.<sup>81</sup> DeGruy believes what feeds the ever-present anger are the lies told concerning freedom, inclusion, equality, justice, and the pursuit of happiness.<sup>82</sup> She unpacks the impact of slavery on both Black and White individuals and how slavery, and the process, was inherently rooted in anger and violence.<sup>83</sup> This led African Americans to believe that anger and violence were necessary for their needs to be met because anger and violence sustained the institution of slavery.<sup>84</sup> The remanence of slavery impacts how

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79. DeGruy, 113-114. See William Grier and Price Cobb's book *Black Rage: Two Black Psychiatrists Reveal the Full Dimensions of the Inner Conflicts and the Desperation of Black Life in the United States* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1992).

80. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 114.

81. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 114-116.

82. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 114-116.

83. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 114-122.

84. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 114-122.

African American families survive with blocked opportunities, microaggressions, and everyday racism. Anger is fueled by block opportunities for equitable education, educational opportunities, bank lending, and impacted by gentrification, redlining, and the lack of economic advancement for Black individuals. DeGruy makes a solid case for ever-present anger being a reality for many Black people and how it impacts racist socialization.

### **Racist Socialization**

There are various perspectives concerning "Blackness," as defined by many Black Americans. Racist socialization is the belief that White and all things associated with Whiteness are superior and that Black and all things associated with Blackness are inferior.<sup>85</sup> These perspectives speak to internalized trauma and tensions within the Black culture that is worth considering when hiring Black leaders to work for a predominantly White organization. Consider influencers like Barack and Michelle Obama, Jay-Z, Beyonce, and Kamala Harris— they are considered figures who "represent the culture." Many Black individuals do not consider individuals such as Ben Carson, Thomas Sowell, Voddie Baucham, and Candace Owens to represent "Blackness" and "culture." Racist socialization deals with the various colors of Blackness that have been categorized and classified by society and what Black individual believes about themselves. There are two categories that fall within racist socialization. DeGruy elaborates by addressing how Black individuals socialize and accept Whiteness as the standard, which leads to adopting racists ideas, beliefs, and prejudices toward the Black race. She highlights how racist socialization impacts the Black community because many individuals interpret Black communities through a White lens, ideology, beliefs, and experience. Moreover,

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85. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 116.



it makes these individuals feel like it's their job to save other Blacks from communities not commonly accepted by Whiteness.

Jemar Tisby notes how racialization differs from straightforward racism.<sup>86</sup> He builds upon Emerson and Smith's idea, writing, "discrimination in a racialized society is increasingly covert, embedded in the normal operations of institutions, and it avoids direct racial terminology, making it invisible to most White people."<sup>87</sup> However, for many Black people, discrimination is not invisible. The impact of slavery shaped how White people view Black people and how Black people view themselves and other Black people. DeGruy and other scholars call it adopting the slave master's value system—the foundational belief that White and all things associated with Whiteness are superior, and all things associated with Blackness are inferior.<sup>88</sup> She makes a case for the socialization of Black people being akin to White racists, thus leading to the affirmation of racist ideas and beliefs about themselves. Various scholars believe Black people generally are forced to see themselves and their community through a White lens, which leads to accommodating White prejudices and adopting White standards.<sup>89</sup> DeGruy reveals this reality by unpacking how Black people alter their image, hair, material success, and how they view violence and brutality.<sup>90</sup>

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86. Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism*, 225

87. Tisby, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 225.

88. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 116.

89. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 116.

90. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 116.

DeGruy describes the impact of slavery and the pursuit of White beauty. Slaves that worked in the fields were typically darker with thicker hair, whereas slaves inside the home were lighter-skinned with straight hair.<sup>91</sup> Ayana Bryd and Lori Tharps write;

Good hair was thought of as long and lacking kinks, tight curls, and frizz. The straighter, the better. Bad hair was the antithesis, namely African hair in its purest form. White slave masters reinforced the "good-haired," light skin power structure... At slave auctions, they would pay almost five times more for a house slave than for a field slave, showing they were more valuable.<sup>92</sup>

This historical perspective began the socialization of Black people and continues to impact how Black people, particularly, Black women, are viewed. DeGruy re-emphasizes how racists socialization affects how Black people fail to celebrate fellow Black individuals. These differences are found within opportunities among lighter and darker Black individuals. Unfortunately, the slave narratives and other historical accounts perpetuate feelings of separateness and distrust.<sup>93</sup> Consider how slave masters would often have enslaved people beat enslaved people that disobeyed or were being punished. DeGruy claims, "Black overseers who were assigned the duties of monitoring and disciplining the field slaves were often more brutal than their White counterparts. One of the reasons for their brutality was that they did not want to be perceived as being lenient and lose their position."<sup>94</sup> Thus, the disconnection between Black people who assimilate to Whiteness versus Black individuals who do not necessarily assimilate.

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91. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 116-134.

92. Ayana Bryd and Lori Tharps, *Hair Story: Untangling the Roots of Black Hair in America*, (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2001).

93. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 118.

94. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 118.

Building upon the deep mistrust within the Black community, enslaved people who worked in the enslaver's home or worked directly with the enslavers were often separate from those who worked the fields and were brutally beaten. To use an explicit example of how racist socialization is assumed, consider Candace Owens, Thomas Sowell, Voddie Baucham, and Ben Carson and how a large population of Black people do not support them and their platforms. These individuals are often viewed by many Black people as individuals who work for and support systems and institutions that continue to oppress Black people. When Black individuals feel as if other Black people lack the cultural aspects or do not publicly and politically associate with most Black people, they are considered sellouts. Thus, highlighting transgenerational trauma, history, and PTSS on both sides of the coin demonstrates the tensions of limiting the Black community through PTSS. Signs of PTSS are important to consider, and DeGruy offers a different perspective; however, scholars have not fully explored this theory. Some scholars do not believe the theory is fully reliable in explaining the Black experience in America. Particularly Ibram X. Kendi believes PTSS dismisses the truth that racial inequalities and discrimination resulted in inferior opportunities for Black people and not an inferior racial group.<sup>95</sup> These criticisms are fair critiques as DeGruy's work does not speak specifically to the factors of racial inequalities and the role of discrimination against Black people in America.

Nevertheless, it is evident that trauma leads to harsh criticism and severe denigration for Black individuals who accept White as the standard. This happens to be another indicator of racist socialization. It is easier to accept why Black people struggle to support and affirm other Black individuals' accomplishments when viewed from a historical perspective.<sup>96</sup>

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95. Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped From the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (Bold Type Books, 2016), 627.

96. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 117.

Intergenerational trauma reminds us of how House slaves separated Black slaves from the field slaves, mixed skin to dark skin Black, age, size, value, etc.<sup>97</sup> Thus, the use of figures such as Candace Owens, Thomas Sowell, Voddie Baucham, and Ben Carson who for many Black people represent the house slave. This is precisely where deep-rooted skepticism, distrust, and feelings of separateness stem from within the Black community.

There is no justification for excommunicating Black individuals who fall into the minority category of racist socialization. Rather, I am articulating an important tension and reality. Black people face because the percentage is clear that Black people do not collectively have the power to live a separatist life from each other or the White community. DeGruy expounds on this idea of racist socialization by saying, "From the time of their capture or birth, slaves saw Whites as strong, rich, well-fed, secure, and healthy. In relation to themselves, Whites were perceived to be powerful and dominant. Slaves had the opposite qualities. Relative to Whites, they were weak, poor, impoverished, insecure, and unhealthy.

Simply put, they were impotent and submissive. With which set of qualities would you wish to be associated?"<sup>98</sup> There are inner cultural tensions and realities for Black people seeking to survive, thrive, and stay alive. Thus, the natural art of code-switching and living life with double consciousness. Unfortunately, this dualistic way of thinking can force Black people to choose one culture over the other as a means of survival. Moreover, it can impact Black individuals until they reach a breaking point and no longer operate with a double conscious.

These realities from slavery further affirm that Whites are superior, powerful, and right regarding living. White is the standard that all individuals must pursue, and Black is not the

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97. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 117.

98. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 116-135.

standard and is deemed inferior. This statement alone speaks to the Bobo Doll study and individuals' beliefs about others and themselves. Black people have historically been treated aggressively through words and physical violence. This aggression is not only from White people, but it manifests within the Black community itself. Consider how Black parents may interact with their children compared to White parents.<sup>99</sup> For Black people, sources of stress or triggers are rooted in experiencing racism. Here are a few questions worth considering as I unpack the implications of transgenerational trauma. If White is the standard model for Americans, how does that speak to individuals who refuse to assimilate to Whiteness? If Black individuals cannot fully embody who God created them to be, what are the implications of transgenerational trauma? If Black leaders working within predominantly White organizations bear the weight and stress of constantly being outnumbered, what are the implications of transgenerational trauma for Black leaders? What are the implications of Black leaders demonstrating signs of PTSS?

### **What are the implications for Black leaders suffering from Transgenerational Trauma?**

Many scholars explicitly outline the impact of slavery, the historical narrative around Black people shaped by White stereotypes, and the lack of systems and processes for integrating Black slaves into society. The enslaved were expected to migrate into the dominant culture without any psychological treatment for Black people's trauma endured for centuries. In light of this reality, I suggest that the impact and implications for Black leaders working within a predominantly White organization are: 1) Black leaders are dealing with trauma that has not been adequately addressed, and patterns of anger, frustration, and vacant esteem; 2) If the trauma has been addressed, they are likely facing minimization of their experiences when vacant esteem and

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99. AJ+ Opinion, "*Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome. How Is It Different from PTSD?*" (November 8, 2019, Accessed March 19, 2021), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rorgjdvpek&t=187s>.

anger manifests itself; 3) Black leaders are forced to choose between White culture or Black culture, never feeling as though they can be themselves within the organization. Therefore, transgenerational trauma, and signs of PTSS, become a way for Black leaders to understand themselves and why they react in certain ways when triggered within predominantly White organizations. In addition, transgenerational trauma and signs of PTSS becomes a way for White leaders to empathize better and demonstrate the solidarity needed to work together. Therefore, it is important for White leaders to consider common struggles of Black leaders and how transgenerational trauma manifests within Black leaders in predominantly White organizations.

As emphasized previously in this chapter, the Black experience is not a monolith, and not every Black experience and perspective of predominantly White organizations is the same. I have attempted to demonstrate the vastly different beliefs, theological frameworks, and social worldviews that demonstrate the diversity of thought within the Black community. Despite these differences, common trends and research affirm issues between Black and White leaders surrounding the intersections of racism, justice, and culture. Many Black people who work within predominantly White organizations are caught between two worlds that many White leaders are unaware of or understand. These Black leaders often occupy these spaces with a double consciousness or by assimilating. Leaders, in general, adapt within organizations and learn the art of code-switching, which is the practice of alternating between two or more languages or varieties of language in conversation. For Black leaders, code-switching is forced assimilation into predominantly White organizations, often disguised as a Black leader operating out of double consciousness and never feeling integrated into the organization. Here is the common reality for Black leaders in predominantly White organizations— either assimilate and comply, suppress your trauma, experiences, and beliefs, or leave the organization. Black leaders

who operate with a double consciousness and cultural intelligence understand their role within the organization and learn to navigate it without compromising who they are and what they are supposed to accomplish. If Black leaders are not mindful and aware, they will continue to demonstrate signs of transgenerational trauma within a majority White context. However, it must not fall on Black leaders to create safe environments for themselves. It is equally the responsibility of White leaders who invite Black leaders into their organization.

Life experiences, Black identity, and what it means to be a Black leader in a predominantly White world are thoughts that conscious Black leaders wrestle with inside predominantly White organizations. White leaders must understand that Black leaders may have radically different experiences within the Black culture and most White culture. Unfortunately, when tensions arise, the underlying issue is that Black leaders are being asked to navigate a world with folkways radically different from what they have had to navigate in the large sphere of America and their Black experience. In other words, Black leaders are expected to enter a world unlike the world they have had to navigate before without any consideration or understanding of who they are and what has shaped their experiences. If Black leaders are being asked to assimilate into a White organization, this reality can lead Black leaders to wrestle with their identity as Black individual. Thus, it is difficult to answer what it means to be a Black leader in a predominantly White organization, particularly a Christian organization. White leaders should not assume that Black leaders will figure out what it means to be a Black leader by being thrown to the wolves. It often leads to transgenerational trauma and signs of PTSS, leading to the Black leader leaving the organization emotionally damaged.

Black people have had to get their affirmation and healing within their communities, churches, and, to an extent, in the political arena because many Black people believe that White

Christians are on the wrong side of the tracks regarding human dignity and rights and equality.

Historically, receiving affirmation from White leaders has not been the experience for Black people in America. Consider these words of lament by Tom Skinner as he spells out the realities of the 70s while simultaneously highlighting traits of transgenerational trauma:

The first is the crisis of the Black man's past: whether he can overcome the years of slavery, the years of subjection to fourth-class citizenship and disenfranchisement, and the rage that is within him as a result of his past. Second is the crisis of the Black man's identity: his struggle to discover himself, who he is, what he is here for, and where he is going. The third is the crisis of community, both the Black man's relationship with his Black brother and his relationship with his White brother: whether the Black community can survive, and more, provide leadership in American society. And fourth is the crisis of power: having discovered his past and learned how to overcome it, having discovered who he is and who his neighbor is and how he ought to relate to him, the Black man must find the power to pull it off. At this point, he faces the same problem his White brother faces. The White brother has had no problem in discovering his past and overcoming it, he has had no problem discovering who he is, he knows what his responsibility ought to be toward his neighbor –but he has never had the power to pull it off. The choice to understand what has brought on these crises –the crisis of his past, the crisis of who he is, the crises community, and the crisis of power we must go back to the very beginning; we must go back to where it all started because it is here that we will discover the essence of the gospel.<sup>100</sup>

Scholars like Skinner, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, DuBois, and James Baldwin all understood how important it was for Black people to understand who they were. Honoring, dignifying, and affirming Black identity has been an issue in America since its inception, and unfortunately, Christianity in America has not historically affirmed the identity of Black people...

Suppose the purpose of humanity is to reflect the invisible God and to mirror the actions of Jesus. How should leaders reckon with the realities of transgenerational trauma plaguing Black people in America? For Black leaders asked to serve in predominantly White organizations, without adequate care for their mental health and growth, the organization must understand Black leaders' risks and weigh their ask. They risk Black leaders being exiled from

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100. Tom Skinner, *How Black is the Gospel?* (New York, NY: Skinner Institute, 1973), 20-22.



the Black community, manifesting transgenerational trauma, and facing a racial identity crisis. In other words, are White leaders ready to bear the weight of Black leaders potentially having a traumatic experience that impacts their lives, body, and spirituality? On the other hand, is this reality a burden White leader is ready to share with their Black counterparts and individuals they consider friends?

Considering slavery, Jim Crow, the civil rights era, and racial tensions throughout American history, transgenerational trauma manifests through trust issues, depression, anxiety, vacant esteem, ever-present anger, and racist socialization. When faced with cultural challenges around race and ethnicity, White leaders should engage Black leaders and seek to understand their lived experiences by affirming their humanity and recognizing the difficulties and tensions Black leaders could face working in predominantly White organizations if trauma has not been addressed. Even though Black experiences may vary within predominantly White organizations, it is evident that during the civil rights era, the 1990s, and currently, there are working tensions for Black leaders working within predominantly White organizations, including within Christian institutions. These problems stem from leaders not being fully equipped to manage racial tensions, address the impact of intergenerational trauma, and ensure their organization is set up for integrating Black leaders.

Accepting racism as a fallen state, and chalking it up to human depravity, is not the way forward. These excuses are often rooted in White fragility and cognitive dissonances. Christians are not called to settle for the current fallen state and nature of humanity; instead, Christians are called to reform it and prepare humanity for the New Heavens and New Earth and the inauguration of God's Kingdom once and for all. God's future Kingdom is the world's hope in the age to come. Regardless of how White leaders and Black leaders respond within their

organization, these theories are not a scapegoat for passively sitting idle, awaiting Christ's return. It is undeniable that intergenerational trauma stems from human depravity and sin. However, it is because of Christian complicity and a lack of repentance that sustains the cycle of trauma. It is essential that the White church disassociate itself from partisan politics and the impact on its culture. The Church is called to Christ-centeredness and not individual transactions with Christ that only serve oneself and tribe. Churches must move away from partisan politics by bringing the Kingdom to bear with those that are homeless, needy, and poor— helping all of creation to flourish. What we consider social issues must be considered Kingdom issues because they directly impact individuals Christians proclaim to be image-bearers of God?

DeGruy concludes by demonstrating the unique socialization experiences that Black people have endured for centuries through systematic and traumatic programming of inferiority.<sup>101</sup> The way forward for Black people is to find true healing. DeGruy and various Black scholars believe that Africans were taught they were inferior physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually, thus making them less desirable in their own eyes and the eyes of society around them.<sup>102</sup> Vacant esteem, ever-present anger, and racist socialization are all present realities for Black people. DeGruy provides helpful ways forward for Black people to overcome PTSS: 1) Building on Black Strengths; 2) Faith and Religion; 3) The Spirit of Community; 4) Establishing Strong Leadership. This connects to Sheila Wise Rowe's work towards healing within the Black community found in her book *Healing Racial Trauma*. It is convincing enough to believe that these steps for Black people were the same steps various Black leaders have always desired. Building self-esteem, taking greater control of the inner world for the Black

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101. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 134-200.

102. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 134-200.

community, and racially socializing Black individuals and communities are steps forward in healing. This form of healing is embedded in the religious fabric of African American culture, dating back to slavery and how the enslaved persevered.<sup>103</sup>

Scholars suggest the importance of Black people changing their minds about themselves and what they have been taught to believe about themselves. What has been taught is that Black people are not trustworthy, thus leading to mistrust and a constant state of suspicion.<sup>104</sup> This is a general perspective within America, but DeGruy urges Black people to not only trust one another but to lean into each other and various communities. When unified, Black people collectively have achieved great accomplishments. Transgenerational trauma and signs of PTSS demonstrate why Black people continue to fight for their voices to be heard within the broader culture of America. The healing happens when Black people feel as though they have an equal seat at the table and not merely an invitation to a historical dinner that has been ongoing for centuries. White leaders must do the work of recognizing their own biases and how their biases influence their theology, politics, organizational structure, and social worldview.

The next portion of this thesis project is designed to help White leaders and White evangelicals better understand themselves and how they may or may not respond when working with Black leaders within their organizations. Three psychological patterns of behavior occur that will be used for examining White leaders— Cognitive Bias, Confirmation Bias, and Cognitive Dissonance. These behaviors fall underneath the umbrella of intergenerational trauma. The aim is for leaders to understand better how cognitive bias, confirmation bias, and cognitive

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103. DeGruy, *See p. 188 for specific details on this subject matter.*

104. DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing*, 187.

dissonance impact their organization, particularly when addressing how leaders handle conflict and respond to hard conversations dealing with racism, White supremacy, and justice.

### **Cognitive Bias**

I must state that I am explicitly focusing on cognitive biases within White individuals. Of course, no one is exempt from bias or prejudice, but this section is designed to demonstrate cognitive bias in White leaders. "Cognitive Bias is a strong, preconceived notion of someone or something, based on information individuals perceive to have, or narratives that have been created based on their sources and historical lens. These preconceptions are mental shortcuts the human brain produces to expedite information processing that quickly helps it make sense of what the individual is seeing, experiencing, and feeling."<sup>105</sup> Cognitive bias refers to the tendency to seek out information that supports something individuals already believe and is a particularly pernicious subset of cognitive bias.<sup>106</sup> In other words, you remember the hits and forget the misses, which is a flaw in human reasoning. As a result, people will commit to things that matter to them, and dismiss the things that don't, often leading to the "ostrich effect," where a subject buries their head in the sand to avoid information that may disprove their original point.<sup>107</sup> The process of burying one's head into the sand is where cognitive dissonance plays a role and is often the case when discussing issues of racism, the history of America and the Church, and

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105. Masterclass Staff, *"How to Identify Cognitive Bias: 12 Examples of Cognitive Bias,"* Masterclass, November 8, 2020, accessed August 2, 2021, <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-identify-cognitive-bias#what-is-cognitive-bias>.

106. Masterclass Staff, *"How to Identify Cognitive Bias: 12 Examples of Cognitive Bias."* Appendix A: The 12 Forms of Cognitive Bias.

107. Masterclass Staff.

racial inequalities in America. Appendix A demonstrates different forms of cognitive biases that are important to understand as they will be referenced in preceding chapters.<sup>108</sup>

As emphasized, these biases are not limited to White leaders; instead, they can manifest within all cultures and people groups. Depending upon the historical narrative that has informed individuals and the role of intergenerational trauma, leaders alike can be impacted by cognitive biases. The varieties in which cognitive biases impact leaders can often determine how Black leaders respond to conflict and adapt to a predominantly White organization. Leaders must recognize their biases and preferences by acknowledging their potential prejudices that have been shaped by transmitted trauma. It is undeniable that intergenerational trauma plays a vital role in how biases impact individuals. White leaders can reduce cognitive bias by being aware, challenging their personal beliefs, and attempting to approach topics and situations blind and devoid of preconceived notions. If White leaders can limit the amount of information or misinformation, the chances of them modeling one of the twelve behaviors becomes less.

However, there is more to understanding cognitive biases. Suppose Christians have not divested from implicit biases and theology that does not view humanity equally created in God's image, as described in chapter two. In that case, this vicious cycle will continue to traumatize mainly Black individuals within these organizations. Cognitive bias is connected to confirmation bias, and I believe understanding both will help leaders better understand how cognitive bias and confirmation bias may impact their organization. Cognitive bias is psychological, but it directly correlates to how individuals view God. Moreover, it becomes a reflection of their theology and relationship with God, which leads them to only various forms of tribalism and in-group/out-group bias.

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108. See Appendix A.

## Confirmation Bias

Confirmation biases impact how we gather information while simultaneously influencing how we interpret and recall information.<sup>109</sup> In other words, politically and theologically conservative people may only seek information that supports their conservative stances and seek out media outlets, podcasts, and resources that affirm their conservative ideologies. The same is stated with those who are more moderate, liberal, and or progressive in their beliefs politically and theologically. Unlike cognitive bias, confirmation bias does not discriminate, and if not recognized, it can hinder organizations from becoming authentically diverse. Confirmation bias seeks to reaffirm and reinforce attitudes and behaviors predetermined by their cognitive biases.<sup>110</sup> Confirmation biases manifest themselves within predominantly White organizations around issues of racism, White supremacy, historical understanding, and perspective, and matters of injustice. Thus, influencing how organizations operate, train, and develop leaders. Stroking broad generalities, Christian White leaders tend to align with the moral majority's perspective and approach concerning these matters. Regardless of denomination and class, more than 80% of White evangelicals voted Republican in the 2020 election of President Donald Trump.<sup>111</sup> The opposite statement could be demonstrated for Black Christians who voted in the opposite direction of the Republican party, despite sharing a conservative worldview. They can fall into the same trap as individuals on the opposing side.

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109. Amy Morin, "How Confirmation Bias Works" VeryWell Mind, July 30, 2021, accessed August 13, 2021, <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-a-confirmation-bias-2795024>.

110. Morin, "How Confirmation Bias Works."

111. Tom Gjelten, "Faith Vote Reflects 2016 Patterns," NPR, November 8, 2020, accessed March 21, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2020/11/08/932263516/2020-faith-vote-reflects-2016-patterns>.

Nevertheless, many Black leaders believe that racism and White supremacy impact everyday living and have possibly impacted them directly within the organization.<sup>112</sup> Black leaders affirm that they have experienced discrimination inside their predominantly White organization, thus leading them to a mass exodus.<sup>113</sup> Although these realities exist currently, it is helpful for leaders to consider the role of cognitive psychology and studies that support the idea of cognitive bias. In the 1960s, cognitive psychologist Peter Cathcart Wason conducted several experiments and demonstrated that people tend to seek information that confirms their existing beliefs.<sup>114</sup> What was found is that confirmation bias can prevent people from looking at situations objectively and influence the decisions made, thus leading to poor decision-making choices.<sup>115</sup> Leadership is about understanding the impact of decisions made and how they holistically affect individuals and their organizations. The major issues with cognitive bias and confirmation bias occur when individuals do not seek out objective facts and primary sources. Instead, they choose to interpret information in a way that only supports their existing beliefs.<sup>116</sup> It can lead leaders to uphold beliefs and details that affirm their biases without considering the role of intergenerational trauma, experiences, and perspectives of others.

Truth then becomes objective truth and irrefutable, infallible, based on their understanding of God's word and biblical interpretation. In terms of confirmation bias, truth becomes objective truth, and if not diversified, it produces a homogenous culture and ideology

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112. Gjelten, *Faith Vote Reflects 2016 Patterns*.

113. Gjelten, *Faith Vote Reflects 2016 Patterns*.

114. Morin, "How Confirmation Bias Works."

115. Morin, "How Confirmation Bias Works."

116. Morin, "How Confirmation Bias Works."

that does not lead to a diverse organization. Then, the organization functions based on the leaders' particular ideology, historical lens, denominational or theological beliefs, often rooted in the historical lens of the religious right, demonstrated during the civil rights era. This implies the intersection with Christian patriotism, better known as Christian nationalism — where Christianity is associated with Americanism and loyalty to America. These ideologies, supported by cognitive and confirmation biases, reaffirm historical stereotypes and beliefs about opposing ethnic groups when addressing racism, White supremacy, and injustices in America. These ideologies lead to an ultimatum for Black leaders— Black leaders either assimilate and acculturate to the White cultural experience by neglecting their own experiences and doctrines, or they opt out by resigning or accepting the mantle of "cultural misfit" and being terminated by that organization. White organizations will utilize certain gifts and charismatic personality traits of Black leaders by appropriating cultural elements that demonstrate their hopes of being diverse. Despite these realities, Black leaders face within White organizations; it is worth understanding the role of cognitive dissonance and its role among White leaders.

### **Cognitive Dissonance**

Cognitive dissonance is a theory proposing that people have a fundamental motivation to maintain consistency among elements in their cognitive systems. When inconsistency occurs, people experience an unpleasant psychological state that motivates them to reduce dissonance in various ways. Understanding cognitive dissonance is by considering an individual who smokes cigarettes. The individual knows and understands that it is unhealthy and could lead to further complications, but they continue to partake in the behavior. An inconsistency between beliefs, behavior, and information causes dissonance within the individual, leading the person to decide. The decision is to do what is right by stopping the behavior or to justify the behavior with



alternatives that ease the dissonance. Inconsistencies result in psychological tension, and the individual must change their behavior, belief, or information to ensure discomfort and anxieties disappear and subside.

Imagine an individual who knows smoking is bad for them. Smoker justifies their behaviors by eating healthy, working out five days a week, and drinking a gallon of water each day. Instead of changing the behavior, the individual justifies the behavior by practicing other healthy habits. In their mind, it's fine to continue smoking because of the other activities they're participating in. Cognitive dissonance can be seen as an antecedent condition that leads to activity oriented toward reducing dissonance. In other words, it is a way of easing an individual's consciousness to avoid facing the inconsistencies between thought and action. For one reason or another, attempts to achieve consistency may lead to failure for the individual. According to Festinger, under such circumstances, that is, in the presence of inconsistency, there is psychological discomfort.<sup>117</sup>

Cognitive dissonance is a negative emotional state that results from a perceived contradiction between our beliefs and actions.<sup>118</sup> Cognitive dissonance proposes that people have a fundamental motivation to maintain consistency among elements in their cognitive awareness. Two ingredients are classically understood when addressing cognitive dissonance— conflict and tension. When inconsistency occurs, people experience an unpleasant psychological state that motivates them to reduce dissonance in various ways. In chapter one, I shared an example explaining cognitive dissonance among individuals who smoke, and the illustration used must be

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117. Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Redwood, CA: Stanford University Press, 1957), 17.

118. Betsy Sparrow, "*Cognitive Dissonance*," Directed by Anonymous, Produced by Robert Broadhurst, Alexander Street, 2008, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://video.alexanderstreet.com/watch/cognitive-dissonance>.

understood as this section continues. The first step in understanding cognitive dissonance is understanding the role of dissonance, which is the inconsistency within oneself. Dissonance implies a level of psychological discomfort, which motivates individuals to try and reduce the dissonance by seeking consonance.<sup>119</sup> In other words, when there is dissonance, the goal is to manage the damage by resolving all forms of discomfort. When describing this theory, Festinger argues that Cognitive dissonance is an antecedent condition that leads to activity oriented toward dissonance reduction, just as hunger leads to action-oriented toward hunger reduction.<sup>120</sup>

When White leaders are faced with the realities of racism, White supremacy, and justice, many leaders encounter cognitive dissonance. They manage the dissonance by minimizing or reducing these topics to personal issues. This often leads to inner conflicts concerning beliefs and action, and if Christian, the gravitas of Scripture is then added to the inner dissonance. Thirty years of psychological research on cognitive dissonance has demonstrated that it is a major motivator of human behavior.<sup>121</sup> It's become a provocative theory that has been applied to research on justification, punishment and threat, decision making, and self-concepts.<sup>122</sup> Almost thirty years after Festinger's original experiments, psychologist Joel Cooper and Russel Fazio from Princeton University reviewed all the subsequent research and described what they perceived to be essential components.<sup>123</sup> To change their beliefs, people must define the dissonant action as— unpleasant, freely, chosen, consequential, irrevocable, and arousing.<sup>124</sup>

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119. Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Redwood, CA: Stanford University Press, 1957), 17.

120. Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*.

121. Sparrow, "Cognitive Dissonance."

122. Sparrow, "Cognitive Dissonance."

123. Sparrow, "Cognitive Dissonance." See Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, 12-66.

124. Sparrow, "Cognitive Dissonance." See Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, 12-66.

Cognitive dissonance is a negative state of arousal. There are three stages of cognitive dissonance that individuals may encounter: 1) Change of belief, opinion, and behavior; 2) Add another belief or opinion; or 3) Minimize the importance.

Here are some examples of how cognitive dissonance manifests when addressing individuals who smoke. First, some individuals respond to smoking by believing that smoking is not actually bad for you, and they do not desire to change their behavior."<sup>125</sup> Some individuals may quit smoking because they realize that it is bad for them. Some individuals may continue to smoke while adding new "healthy" alternatives to their lifestyle, such as eating healthy, working out, or consuming a gallon of water per day.<sup>126</sup> Lastly, some may reduce or redirect the negative impact of smoking by communicating how everyone is subject to death, and they are going to continue to smoke because they enjoy smoking, despite knowing it is unhealthy.<sup>127</sup> The following examples demonstrate how cognitive dissonance may manifest for White leaders when addressing racism. There are three nuanced stages of cognitive dissonance, and I will be making broad generalizations and perspectives from various sources.

### **Stage One of Cognitive Dissonance**

In this stage, individuals make it clear that racism is a thing of the past, Black individuals need to get over the topic, and White individuals who believe racism exists, are divisive. These individuals minimize the experiences of Black people by focusing on the need for the Bible being preached, fathers in the household, protecting sacred marriage, doing away with abortion, and preparing for the rapture. These individuals may communicate the need for the gospel to be

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125. Festinger, A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance, 17-56.

126. Festinger, A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance, 17-56.

127. Festinger, A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance, 17-56.

preached and not social justice. They often avoid or minimize racism by deferring to "Whataboutisms," where individuals ask the question to justify their position. Whataboutisms are typically "what about" statements made by individuals seeking to minimize racism."

For example: "What about Black-on-Black crime? What about crime in Chicago? What about fatherless homes? What about Black poverty and ghettos?" Whataboutisms are often another way of minimizing racism and deflecting the real issues, thus the discussions surrounding critical race theory. Emerson and Smith refer to this posture as Accountable Individualism, which means that individuals exist independent of structures and institutions, have free will, and are individually accountable for their actions.<sup>128</sup> These individuals promote skepticism toward the idea that social systems and structures profoundly shape the actions of individuals, thus reducing the importance of communities and institutions shaping the way people think and behave.<sup>129</sup> These individuals do not believe that systems and policies are to blame for race problems in America. Instead, it boils down to motivation and choices made by individuals who believe they are impacted by racism.<sup>130</sup> These individuals not only operate with cognitive biases, but they also quickly transition to confirmation biases by seeking sources that affirm their positions concerning the organization. They often use Scripture, biased news, and media sources, or they find a minority who affirms their position to validate their position. This narrative and behaviors fit Evangelicalism's overall individualistic notion, limiting "sin" to

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128. Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, 17-56.

129. Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism*, 223-230.

130. Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*, 76-87.

individual problems. In other words, these individuals do not reckon with cognitive dissonance; they avoid it or shut it down.

### **Stage Two of Cognitive Dissonance**

In the second stage, the individual may add additional beliefs or opinions or fall into the category of seeing both sides in pursuit of peace and solidarity. Louie Giglio serves as an example of an individual cited earlier who engaged in a conversation about racism. He attempted to redefine and add to terminology, which ultimately led to an abundance of criticism. This second stage of cognitive dissonance is the most challenging stage for individuals because intentions may be pure, but competencies are not always at the level of intentions. Giglio's attempted to help White people understand racism in America and manage his internal dissonance by referring to slavery as a blessing for White people. Individuals often speak prematurely to settle the conflict and internalize dissonance rather than allow it to run its course.

This second stage is where optimism and reality collide. In this stage, the myth of America being a post-racial society because of the civil rights movement and the election of Barack Obama is demonstrated to be false, thus causing further dissonance for individuals facing the realities of racism.<sup>131</sup> Giglio shares, "I am heartbroken about where we are as a nation. I am trying to help myself continue to learn and help my White brothers and sisters understand that White privilege is real. And in trying to get my sentiment across, he used the phrase 'White Blessings,' for which he was apologetic. Horrible choice of words. It does not reflect my heart at all," Giglio concluded.<sup>132</sup> It would have been wise for Giglio to defer to others on the stage for

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131. Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism*, 223-228.

clarity or share his thoughts and ideas off stage with trusted Black friends. Instead, Giglio opened the door for global criticism and contributed to HipHop Artist Lecrae Moore's re-traumatization because of his cognitive dissonance.<sup>133</sup> This further demonstrates that proximity will not solve racism without having meaningful and authentic friendships with people of color. Did Giglio consider the consequences of words and how they would impact Lecrae?

Although Lecrae did not affirm Giglio's position, the fact that he was on stage with an individual who misspoke demonstrates what happens when Black people associate with White individuals who attempt to manage their dissonance prematurely. This example with Giglio and Lecrae exemplifies DeGruy's beliefs concerning PTSS and how it impacts Black people. Lecrae not only experienced transgenerational trauma but had to defend himself publicly, manage harsh scrutiny from the Black community at large, and help his friend Giglio understand where he went wrong.<sup>134</sup> When White individuals add beliefs or opinions and attempt to redefine terms or communicate with new metaphors not rooted in historical facts, it becomes a dangerous and unwise way of managing cognitive dissonance. Unconsciously, it becomes a ploy to justify racist beliefs, behaviors, and actions, which unintentionally cause trauma for Black people associated with them. This second category of dissonance is where White individuals must reckon with their internalized racism and motives.

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132. Keyaira Boone, "Lecrae Says He Was 'Very Uncomfortable' With Louie Giglio's 'Slavery Was A Blessing' Comments" (Essence, December 6, 2020, accessed November 21, 2021), <https://www.essence.com/celebrity/leclae-louie-giglio-slavery-was-a-blessing/>.

133. Boone, "Lecrae Says He Was 'Very Uncomfortable' With Louie Giglio's 'Slavery Was a Blessing' Comments."

134. Boone, "Lecrae Says He Was 'Very Uncomfortable' With Louie Giglio's 'Slavery Was a Blessing' Comments."

In this stage, individuals attempt to settle their dissonance by pulpit swapping, which was used in the 1960s to promote color-blind conservatism or to invite Black speakers to their organization to teach or speak to their predominantly White organization. Refer to the section concerning the Promise Keepers movement and other racial reconciliation efforts. To some degree, these individuals believe that proximity is all individuals need to resolve racism because racism is an individual problem. The example of Giglio and Lecrae demonstrates this narrative to be false. This is what Emerson and Smith call "Relationalism," which places a strong emphasis on interpersonal relationships.<sup>135</sup> In this second stage of cognitive dissonance, White individuals confronted with racism may justify not being racist by promoting their friendships with Black people or how they serve Black communities within their cities. Moreover, they may promote interracial marriage or adoption within their own family. These defense mechanisms are ways White individuals protect themselves from potential blind spots that have been exposed or highlighted.

### **Third Stage of Cognitive Dissonance**

In this stage, the individual understands the effects of racism and changes their beliefs and opinions by engaging biblically, socially, and theologically with individuals who are experts in understanding racism. They engage with vastly different cultures, seek solidarity by sitting under minority leadership, and live an integrated life without promoting their integrated and diverse life. These individuals have worked through their own racial identity and model a life of redemption that impacts, influences, and informs culture. These individuals do not see themselves as experts but as students who understand the importance of deferring to the experts

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135. Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*, 76-77.

when necessary. Moreover, these individuals serve as White leaders who exemplify what it means to be a redemptive leader.<sup>136</sup>

Given the racial climate in America and tensions today, White individuals face cognitive dissonance and respond in the categories previously mentioned. These general behaviors, and examples of cognitive dissonance, will be analyzed in chapters four and five when examining responses and relationships between White and Black leaders. Cognitive bias, confirmation bias, and cognitive dissonance are ways to help White leaders better understand what they may experience and embody when addressing racism, White supremacy, and injustices. The goal is for leaders to understand the role of cognitive and confirmation biases and how they may intersect with cognitive dissonance, considering intergenerational trauma. In other words, it forces White individuals to wrestle with their own racial identity, internalized racism, biases, dissonance, and generational trauma. Behaviors exhibited by Black and White leaders impact their counterparts. But the goal is for leaders to understand their potential triggers of intergenerational trauma by eliminating the potential threat and addressing personal trauma that impacts working relationships and engagement with Black leaders.

### **Conclusion**

I have attempted to create an outline and demonstrate the importance of intergenerational trauma and its effects on leaders. The history of trauma in America continues to impact leaders today. This chapter was designed to demonstrate how intergenerational trauma since slavery has been transmitted from generation to generation, with hardly any attempt at resolving it. If intergenerational trauma was never addressed and resolved, it is safe to assume that trauma impacts working relationships between Black and White leaders. Racism continues to be

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136. Appendix E.



challenging for Black and White leaders working together. In chapter six and seven, I will demonstrate how White leaders demonstrate cognitive bias, confirmation bias, and cognitive dissonance; and how Black leaders demonstrate transgenerational trauma and signs of PTSS. These behaviors are not limited but can be helpful in leaders desiring to transform their organization from a homogenous to a diverse organization. The reality is that intergenerational trauma is tied to the sins of the past generations, which leaders must address as they philosophically and systematically change their organizations. Change is not limited to individuals but must be addressed structurally if they desire to see authentic change.

Psychotherapist Prophecy Coles writes about giving thought and finding meaning in the legacy of our ancestors so that we do not unconsciously re-enact past traumatic experiences as we interact with people of different cultures.<sup>137</sup> People carry their parents' and grandparents' and their ancestors' pain, and until that pain is grieved fully, the legacy continues to be passed on to the next generation.<sup>138</sup> The hope is that leaders will better understand themselves, the role of intergenerational trauma, and how trauma has transmitted and directly impacted them. Chapter five will explain the procedures and research design and provide helpful context for my analysis discussed in chapters six and seven.

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137. Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*, 76-77.

138. Prophecy Coles, *The uninvited guest from the unremembered past: An exploration of the unconscious transmission of trauma across the generations* (London: Karnac Books Ltd., 2011).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Procedures and Research Design

This chapter will provide an overview the research design and methodology used for this project. The methodology used for this project is interviews conducted by four interviewers. Considering the nature of this topic, research demonstrated that interviews seemed to be the most effective for understanding the impact of trauma on individuals suffering from intergenerational trauma, PTSD, and traumatic experiences. The books mentioned in chapters two through four contributed not only to this project but have created conversations for addressing trauma and its impact.<sup>1</sup> Interviews eliminate the ambiguity of traditional surveys and focus groups because they focus on individual responses, impacts, and experiences from the trauma. Moreover, traditional surveys provide general perspectives based on a certain number of individuals but fail to capture actual experiences, stories, and emotions people encounter.

There are various types of interviews conducted for research— structured and unstructured interviews. Initially, the interviews were going to be structured because structured interviews are easy to replicate as a fixed set of closed questions, which are easy to quantify and ensure reliability.<sup>2</sup> Structured interviews are often quick to conduct, which means that many interviews can take place within a short amount of time.<sup>3</sup> However, I felt it necessary to make accommodations for the interviews because of Covid-19 and the nature of the questions and

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1. Korie Edwards, *The Elusive Dream: The Power of Race in Interracial Churches*, (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2021), Susan Faludi, *Stiff: The Betrayal of the American Man* (New York, NY: William Morrow, 2000), Sheila Wise Rowe, *Healing Racial Trauma: The Road to Resilience* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), Dr. Joy DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing* (Portland, OR: Joy DeGruy Publications Inc., 2017), Michael Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2000).

2. Saul McLeod, "The Interview Research Method," Simply Psychology, 2014, (accessed March 18, 2022), <https://www.simplypsychology.org/interviews.html>.

3. McLeod, "The Interview Research Method," Simply Psychology, 2014.

content within this thesis-project. Conducting interviews means a good sample can be obtained, resulting in the findings being representative and generalized to a larger population.<sup>4</sup> In addition there are limitations to structured interviews. Structured interviews are not flexible, which prohibits questions from being impromptu during interviews, and each interviewer needs to follow the guided questions. In addition, the answers from structured interviews lack detail as only closed questions are asked, which generates quantitative data.<sup>5</sup> This implies that a researcher will not know why a person behaves in a certain way, so I decided to use unstructured interviews for this project.

Unstructured interviews do not use any set questions; instead, the interviewer asks open-ended questions based on a specific research topic and attempts to let the interview flow like a natural conversation.<sup>6</sup> I structured the questions to ensure that the topics were discussed, but the interviewer was granted freedom to modify questions to suit the candidate's specific experiences or emotional reactions.<sup>7</sup> Data collected from the books listed above were incredibly powerful, and I desired to capture similar stories and experiences that would demonstrate this project's purpose. I approached the interviews this way because it increases their validity and allows the interviewer to probe for deeper understanding, ask for clarification, and will enable the interviewee to steer the direction of the interview to ensure all topics are covered. This is precisely why I allotted each interview to be conducted for 60-90 minutes and instructed the interviewers to be mindful of emotional reactions leaders may experience. Typically,

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4. McLeod, *"The Interview Research Method,"* Simply Psychology, 2014.

5. McLeod, *"The Interview Research Method,"* Simply Psychology, 2014.

6. McLeod, *"The Interview Research Method,"* Simply Psychology, 2014.

7. McLeod, *"The Interview Research Method,"* Simply Psychology, 2014.

unstructured interviews require training and can be expensive, but all interviewers and interviewees volunteered their participation and had previous interviewing experiences. The interviewers selected all have various experiences engaging in this topic, and collectively, we captured powerful interviews for this project.

When seeking White interviewers and interviewees for this project, I wanted senior-level leaders who serve in churches, non-profits, or academic institutions. I have learned over 15-years is that leaders within predominantly White organizations are more hesitant to engage in topics they deem controversial or political. Whereas Black organizations are more engaged with topics discussed within this project. I understood that Black and White leaders engage with trauma vastly different. Therefore, I reached out to various White leaders and asked for their participation in conducting interviews and leveraging their network of leaders who met the criterion for this project. Initially, I desired to have high-profile White leaders within my network conduct interviews. These leaders were pastors, seminary professors, authors, and or executives within various Christian denominations, institutions, corporate organizations, and non-profits. Unfortunately, six of the ten leaders did not respond, and the other four declined my invitation. Despite supporting this project, they communicated a fear that came with being associated with topics and questions that explicitly addressed racism, social justice, CRT, and cultural experiences. Secondly, others communicated their fear of engaging because it could potentially compromise their livelihood. Lastly, other leaders did not feel equipped or confident in moderating interviews based on the topic.

After receiving this feedback, I leveraged my friendships with Thomas Nicholas, Jonathan Sampson, and Joseph Brown, and they conducted interviews with White leaders within their network. I shared why other White leaders declined to conduct interviews with the

interviewees, and they understood the tensions and committed to being interviewers. The difference between these individuals, and the original interviewers I contacted, was that their livelihood was not connected to Christian institutions. Moreover, they are engaged in similar work that this project addresses. The interviewers for this project were myself, Thomas Nicholas, Jonathan Sampson, and Joseph Brown. We have spent over forty years collectively in Christian spaces and have earned trust and credibility within their networks.

I met with each interviewer, and they affirmed the reasons and tensions behind the initial invitation to various White leaders being declined. Each interviewer was responsible for recruiting leaders within their networks for the interviews through phone calls, emails, or text messages. We shared an overview of the study, and shared the consent form with each leader. Following their recruitment, I met with them, and we discussed levels of engagement and if leaders were willing to be interviewed. Based on the recruitment process and the responses we all received, the reasons leadership did not desire to engage were: 1) Leaders do not desire to engage in topics deemed controversial or “political” because their organization does not permit them to engage in these forms of discussions, or. 2) Leaders do not desire to engage in controversial or “political” topics for fear of losing their livelihood. After reaching out to over fifty leaders, Black leaders were most engaged and willing to participate because many of them left predominantly White organizations and had no fears of losing employment. However, after inviting more than thirty White leaders, they did not respond to the invitation until after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Sunday. Collectively, we were able to secure thirteen leaders for this project. We examined twelve leaders and their experiences. In addition, I provided a bonus interview of a White leader who understands intergenerational trauma and its effects on Black

leaders working within predominantly White organizations.<sup>8</sup> This leader understands the impact and models what it means to be a redemptive White leader engaged in understanding intergenerational trauma.<sup>9</sup>

In addition, I asked several White leaders if they were interested in being interviewed, and they either declined or did not respond to my email or personal messages. When I contacted more than twenty-five Black leaders, nineteen of them responded that they were willing to participate, and the individuals that declined expressed their willingness to participate but did not want to risk their livelihood or employment because of the topics covered, denominational agreements, and policies held within their organization concerning engagement with such topics. Despite affirming the importance of this project, they felt it best to support it at a distance, even though the nature of this project affirms their present reality. They hope to use this resource to start a dialogue with their leadership in hopes of their leadership and organization understanding their experiences as the only, Black leaders on staff. Given the nature of this project, the questions, and the sensitivity of the interview questions, I understand why leaders fear their words being misinterpreted and misconstrued. I have worked in various Christian spaces that range from the following: Pentecostal, Wesleyan, Methodist, Presbyterian, non-denominational, African Methodist Episcopal, and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), and this is a common thread for leaders. I understand the differences particularly between Black and White churches, their involvement with trauma, and how it impacts leaders. These reasons for not engaging with this project are valid and we respected individuals decline the opportunity.

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8. Appendix I.

9. Appendix I.

## **Interviewers**

Over the last 15-years, I have worked with various non-profits and churches and was a signed artist at a Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) record company, publishing, and booking agency. These tensions do are not limited to churches but generally impacts Christian and secular institutions. Therefore, it was vital for me to find leaders within my network to ensure that I would have enough leaders to interview because I believed interviews created an opportunity for accurate results. Considering our exploration of theology and history in chapters two and three, I understood the importance of finding leaders who were familiar with this topic and were willing to participate. In addition, it was important to have leaders conduct interviews having a base understanding of the tensions within Christianity, within organizations, and in Black and White culture.

Thomas Nicholas was born in Maryland and resided in Charlotte, NC. He attended Wake Forest University, received a Finance degree, and then attended the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC) for his Master of Arts in Accounting. After graduating there, Wake Forest, Nicholas took a year of service and worked with a non-profit on the Navajo land, where he began to question the majority White culture, the Imperialist telling of history, and how this intersects with current events. Upon his return to Charlotte, Nicholas began a dual life working in corporate America and serving various non-profits as an activist. Nicholas' engagement centers around racial justice and affordable housing, and he sits on the Board for Rebuilding Charlotte Together Charlotte and founded the Charlotte Embrace Conference. In addition to these efforts, Nicholas attends a multi-ethnic Presbyterian church and has built a network within evangelical organizations throughout Charlotte. Nicholas views himself as a voracious reader of Christian,

literature concerning race and class, and economic ethics and continues to pursue the elusive question, “How do we all get free?”

Jonathan Sampson was born and raised near Charlotte, NC. He graduated *cum laude* from Lee University with a Bachelor of Christian Ministry degree in 2009 and was awarded the Christian Ministry Award. Sampson graduated *cum laude* from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in 2013, with a Master of Divinity degree and will graduate in May 2022 with a Doctor of Ministry degree from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Sampson holds the ministerial rank of Ordained Bishop in the Church of God in Cleveland, TN. Sampson has been active in local church ministry through Bible teaching, preaching, organizational leadership, and leadership development. He has served as their instructor for Lee University since 2014, leading courses in Bible, theology, and Christian leadership. Sampson is an active member of Christ Church, a multi-ethnic congregation in San Francisco, CA.

Joseph Brown is the lead church planter for Restoration Church in St. Louis, Missouri, where he and his wife Brittany live with their family. They are SEND Network church planters, and they participated, and graduated from, the BLVD church planting cohort led by Dhati Lewis at the North American Mission Board. Brown has worked with various organizations and leaders within the Southern Baptist Convention and hopes to create holistic disciple-making churches in their city that are intentionally multi-ethnic in their expression.

### **Interviewees**

I met with each interviewer separately and discussed this project, and we collectively reached out to over fifty leaders across America within our combined networks. Collectively, we interviewed thirteen leaders— seven White leaders and six Black leaders.<sup>10</sup> My research findings

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10. Appendix G.



and conclusions will be addressed in chapter eight. Results from each interview will attempt to see if leaders truly understand the impact of intergenerational trauma and its effects on Black leaders working within predominantly White organizations. Each interview was moderated by one of the four interviewers and this next section will briefly share a summary of each leader and their background.

### **White Leaders**

#### **Michael Richards**

Michael Richards is a 51-year-old White man who grew up in the rural parts of Tennessee. He attended a few churches, mainly Presbyterian and Pentecostal, ranging from 100 to 2000 members. Richards recalls his family exploring the two denominations, which fostered his love and passion for the Bible and following Christ. Richards worked in the banking and financial service industry for 25 years and desires to help others. He serves as a community organizer for a men's fitness group called Manhood Fitness, which connects Christian men through holistic health and relationships. Richard equates his deep faith in Christ to his parents, but he dove deeper into following Christ and loving people as he grew older.

#### **Matthew Little**

Matthew Little is a 58-year-old White male who lives in Richmond, Virginia. His father was a pastor, and he grew up traveling the world but considered Asheville, NC, Long Island, NY, and various countries in Africa home. His father pastored in Asheville and Long Island and worked at a college in Africa. Little describes Asheville as rural White, southern, and lower to middle-class. Long Island was more urban and White middle class. Little continues to partner with various organizations within the southeast region by serving on various boards, committees,

and organizations. Little credits his cultural experiences to his desire to celebrate diversity within organizations.

### **Charles Anderson**

Charles Anderson is a 42-year-old White man who currently leads a church in Louisville, KY, and has spent the last decade serving the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). When he was 10, his family moved to the city because of his father's job. According to Anderson, Anderson's family were casual Christians, but his parents were not devoted Christians. They were Easter and Christian attenders. Following high school, Anderson majored in Communications and eventually went to Liberty University for his master's degree. Following college, Anderson went into ministry and has served in various capacities for 20 years.

### **Brandon Green**

Brendon Green is a 54-year-old White Missions Pastor from Greenville, SC. He has worked for Mauldin United Methodist Church for 20 years and centers his efforts on creating opportunities for Christians to serve one another locally and globally. Green currently engages with several Black leaders and churches within his community seeking to pursue racial reconciliation and healing. Over the last few years, Mauldin United Methodist Church has seen diversity expand within its congregation, and they have made intentional efforts in pursuing diversity among senior leaders. Green is committed to doing the work of racial reconciliation and hopes to see his church continue to grow in its understanding and expression of diversity.

### **Randy Armstrong**

Randy Armstrong is a mid-60-year-old White leader from Fort Myers, FL. Armstrong has served in the Church of God denomination for more than 20 years. Armstrong spent various seasons traveling the country engaging in music and preaching ministry across eleven

denominations. He is passionate about education, teaching, ministry, and seeing all people groups unified. Armstrong is committed and deeply involved with his local church in Fort Myers.

### **Thomas McDonald**

Thomas McDonald is a 41-year-old White pastor who leads Unite Church in Raleigh, NC, and serves as a professor at a local community college. McDonald went to Campbell University, and following college, he went into full-time ministry as a student pastor. McDonald is connected to the SBC and desires to see the SBC more engaged with topics of race and ethnicity. He is passionate about Unite Church reflecting their community which is evenly divided racially between Black, White, and Latino.

### **Dan Stevenson**

Dan Stevenson is a 42-year-old pastor of River Community Church, a multicultural congregation in Chicago. He is passionate about helping White leaders re-discipline the White Church to better engage in topics surrounding diversity. In addition, Stevenson helps lead River Community Outreach, a non-profit that collaborates with the community to reduce sources of trauma and speaks around the country on racial justice and reconciliation. He has written articles for *Christianity Today*, *The Englewood Review of Books*, and *The Covenant Companion*.

### **Black Leaders**

#### **Charles Gladstone**

Charles Gladstone is a 43-year-old Black man from Cincinnati, OH, and worked for Dilworth First Assembly (DFA) for 13 years. Gladstone joined the military and served as Worship and Arts Pastor at DFA as one of few minorities on staff. DFA is an Assemblies of God

Church that is ethnically diverse. Currently, Gladstone works for a multi-ethnic Presbyterian Church and is in the process of completing his doctorate from Liberty University.

### **Brittany Johnson**

Brittany Johnson is a 30-year-old Black Historian who lives in Memphis, TN. She has worked for the state museum and one of Tennessee's historical plantations, where she gives guided tours on the legacy of slavery. Johnson's work as a historian creates unique ministry opportunities for her to demonstrate God's redemptive work by understanding the legacy and history of American chattel slavery. Johnson views this history as a way for Americans to acknowledge, lament, and ultimately heal from the scars intentionally and unintentionally created by our ancestors. She is passionate about educating and equipping young Black college students about the history and legacy of Black ancestors because it creates an opportunity for Black people to connect with their ancestors and carry on the legacy of resilience embedded within Black culture.

### **Damion Thomas**

Damion Thomas is a 41-year-old Black speaker, poet, and award-winning filmmaker who currently resides in Atlanta, GA. Thomas received his bachelor's degree from the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) and his master's and doctorate from Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS). Thomas has spoken around the nation and in places such as Sudan, South Africa, China, and Palestine. He serves as an adjunct professor at Kilns College and teaches on human rights, de-colonizing your faith, and filmmaking. In addition, he has more than seventeen years of experience preaching and teaching the peace of Jesus in ethnically divided countries, cultures, and communities.

### **Kendra Powers**

Kendra Powers is a 32-year-old Black leader who lives in Atlanta, GA. Following high school, Powers migrated south to attend Elon University, where she studied Data and Statistics. In 2020, Powers started her own non-profit, It Stops Now, out of protest and in response to the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. Her organization's mission is to collaboratively educate, empower, and deploy the people of Atlanta to end systemic racism. Powers' vision for It Stops Now organization is to lead the nation in radical racial reform as Christians follow the example of Jesus Christ, the revolutionary, to reveal God's Kingdom on earth.

### **Kendrick Long**

Kendrick Long is a 32-year-old Black worship pastor from Chicago, IL. Following college, Long became a full-time artist Long and has traveled the world with a variety of gospel, CCM, and independent artists. Long is committed to his local church, activism, racial healing, and unity within the American Church. He has spent the last eight years working for various churches and speaks about social justice, worship, and racial healing throughout the country.

### **Interviews and Confidentiality**

All participation records in this research project are kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. Due to Covid-19, each interview was recorded via zoom and saved in a password-protected folder, which was transferred to a secondary encrypted hard drive.<sup>11</sup> All participants were guaranteed confidentiality, and the only individuals with access to the interviews were the principal investigator, myself, my D. Min supervisor, my D. Min reader, and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Each interview was approximately 60-90 minutes long, and each interviewee was assigned an

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10. Appendix B

interviewer. I conducted all interviews with Black leaders, except for one White leader, and Nicholas, Davis, and Brown were assigned White leaders whom they recruited. The interviewers sent each leader the required Consent form to review the nature of this project. These interviews were strictly voluntary, but each interviewer, interviewee, and I were required to sign the Consent forms, which were stored on the encrypted hard drive. The only individuals permitted to obtain the signed Consent forms are myself, my D. Min supervisor, my D. Min reader, and the IRB of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. It was important that all parties involved felt that their identity and organization were protected and confidential concerning this project's topic. The next two chapters will explore interviews conducted with these Black and White leaders.

## CHAPTER SIX

### The Examination of White leaders

“To accept one’s past—one’s history— is not the same thing as drowning in it; it is learning how to use it. An invented past can never be used; it cracks and crumbles under the pressures of life like clay in a season of drought.”

—James Baldwin

### Introduction

This chapter will examine the experiences of White leaders who have worked with Black leaders within various capacities. The leaders identify as Christian and have served in various leadership roles for more than ten years. The interviews captured the White leaders’ childhood experiences, their experiences with White organizations, interactions with Black leaders, social issues, and their perspective on what needs to change within White organizations.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will demonstrate signs of either cognitive bias, confirmation bias, or cognitive dissonance within each leader.<sup>2</sup> It is essential to review and consider the implications of these behaviors considering individual engagement with Black leaders. It is helpful to consider the implications of unaddressed intergenerational trauma, dating back to slavery, and how trauma has been transmitted from generation to generation to these leaders. Consider the historical implications of chapter 3 and how it presently connects to responses from White leaders. When intergenerational trauma is triggered, consider how it manifests for White leaders in this chapter through either Cognitive Bias, Confirmation Bias, or Cognitive Dissonance.<sup>3</sup> It is helpful to review the 12 forms of cognitive bias and how they manifest within White leaders. Throughout the interviews, each leader demonstrated various forms of cognitive biases and cognitive dissonance. Therefore,

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1. Appendix C.

2. Appendix A.

3. Appendix A.

this chapter will examine how intergenerational trauma manifests in White leaders through cognitive bias, confirmation bias, or cognitive dissonance.

### **Michael Richards**

Michael Richards is a 51-year-old White man who grew up in the rural parts of Tennessee. He attended a few churches, mainly Presbyterian and Pentecostal, ranging from 100 to 2000 members. Richards recalls his family exploring the two denominations, which fostered his love and passion for the Bible and following Christ. Richards worked in the banking and financial service industry for 25-years and desires to help others. Growing up, South Knoxville was primarily White, and Richard recalls the area with very little diversity and poor White people. Richard equates his deep faith in Christ to his parents, but he dove deeper into following Christ and loving people as he grew older.

Manhood Fitness is in 48 states, but the organization is well established in various city areas in Knoxville. Although there are several different Manhood Fitness groups, they all partner with an urban non-profit, and the men's group is called 007. This partnership has created opportunities for diverse leaders who lead the group fitness sessions. However, when it comes to the racial demographic of Manhood Fitness, the organizations' leadership in Knoxville is predominantly White and has not changed since it began. The racial demographics of 007 frequently change, but it is primarily White, depending upon the week. The leadership rotates often, but according to Richards, "it probably needs to change every once in a while to keep things fresh." However, he believes that racial demographics are not a big issue.

Richards thinks, "We're all the same. When it comes to fitness, we're attics, and we're all God's children. My interest is in serving humanity. Jesus died on the cross for everybody." In terms of south Knoxville, it seems to be Whiter, so I guess that's why it's so White." Manhood



Fitness does have conversations about not being stale and needing to change. However, Richards believes that organizations should reflect the demographics of the country. “To be realistic, the United States is made up of 70% Whites, 13% Blacks, and others, so I guess it would look like that. The point is, who cares! We’re all exactly the same. We’re all the same. We’re all children of God, and Jesus died on the cross. We’re all his children, and no one is better than the other. Gosh, it just seems like the focus is on us being God’s children.” Richards shared about how many of the MF guys attended the same local church, and according to Richards, “If there were 100 people, you would expect 70 to be White, 13 to be Black, and the remainder to be Hispanic. It seems more math-oriented. If 13% are Black, you would expect 13 who work at Harris Teeter to be Black. A lot of times, it’s all White, and the 13% should be Black.” When people are not used to being around other races, Richards struggles to understand why but acknowledges that individuals may be fearful.

When it comes to race and ethnicity, Richards shared an experience of visiting Rwanda and the reaction of Rwandans when they saw White individuals. Richards said, “They looked like they’d seen a ghost.” Richards believes that culture and society have made things more intense than they need to be and quoted Rodney King, “Can we all just get along?” He does not believe there are issues, but he does believe there is animosity and has experienced it “from the other side.” Richards acknowledged segregation within the Church but thought people should go where they desired. The positives of being diverse are that other cultures can learn from each other. Richards shared, “I love learning. I love to break people’s stereotypes of me. We do not need to stereotype each other. We’re all individuals, and it does not matter. It’s the inside that matters. This is why I love talking to people all over the world because you learn so many things you haven’t even thought about before. I think a lot of knowledge can be derived from there.”

Richards shared stories about Manhood Fitness and 007 workouts together, how White and Black guys felt nervous and judged each other based on physical characteristics. He shared, “I don’t want to judge anyone, but sometimes I have a problem judging the ones judging.”

According to Richards, “Race is how society has divided us up by the hue and tone of our skin color. Maybe it was innocent initially, but now we have this racism that says my race is better than yours.” Richards shared stories about his time in Rwanda, eugenics, power based on physical characteristics, and the implications and impact of racism. Racism in Rwanda was based on the Belgians colonizing the Tutsi and Hutu people and how the Belgians supported the Tutsis’ political power. Eventually, the Hutus rebelled and became the oppressor. Richards recalls the history taught on his trip where Tutsis and Hutu people were judged based on physical characteristics, skin hue, and how they impacted the country. However, after years of oppression, things flipped, but eventually, the Tutsis and Hutus reconciled their differences. For Richards, this highlighted the side-effects of colonization, political corruption, and racism.

When it comes to present-day racism in America, Richard sees America declining, and racism is becoming the “boogie man.” Richards speaks about the KKK in the 1920s and how it was its political party. “Well, they were democrats, but they were hardcore, were pissed, and we’re going to lynch Black people. I don’t know anybody like that. I live in a pretty wealthy city, and it’s urban. Maybe they live out in the country, but I grew up in the mountains, and I did not see much there.” Richards believes there are definitely racists in America and thinks racism is like spitting on God’s child. He feels that America is the world’s melting pot, but he’s not sure why White Republicans are labeled as racists. Richard said, “You just grouped me in and made me a stereotype based on a label. And I’m thinking to myself, are you going to measure my nose like the Tutsis’?” Richards does not think it is nearly as bad as the media, tv, and internet

portrays it to be in America, but adamantly believes this racism is due to people not treating individuals as God's child.

Richards believes that it is vital for the Church to teach the Bible. Richards passionately shared, "The Church has got to explain that we are all the same. It's so simple. We are all God's children, regardless of skin hue. I was raised color-blind, and the greatest hero for me in the 70s was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. My dad loved him, and what an amazing human being. And now if you are White, Southern, and Republican, and you mention him, it's 'oh, you're appropriating him.'" Richards does not believe people have the right to determine who is considered his hero because Richard believes in the content of character, not the color of an individual's skin. "I can't imagine a church doing a better job at leading this than Ebenezer. And how you bring about a change to an entire country." Richards believes that King exemplifies how leaders, and the Church, should address social issues. In addition, he believes that Jesus was willing to die for all sins and serves as the ultimate example of forgiveness. Richards experienced firsthand reconciliation in Rwanda, and he seeks to model reconciliation and participate in these efforts, which are informed by his transformative experience in Rwanda.

Richards desires to make people feel comfortable by not labeling people regarding cultural differences. Richards shared, "I don't really think about what color they are or anything. Maybe I should do more." However, Richards does not believe Scripture addresses social issues because "It (Scripture) inherently assumes we are all the same. If you had a problem with somebody because of their skin, you are making Christianity too complicating." Richards believes that Scripture makes it clear to love your neighbor as yourself. Richards is disconnected from most social issues and does not talk about them often but reads resources such as *The Economist*, *Reuters*, and *BBC News*. Richards believes that in America, everything is done in

extremes. When he was in school, slavery was considered overlooked and Whitewashed, but now, it is all schools focus on in history classes. Richards shared that his son is currently learning primarily about slavery, based on the 1619 project, but has not learned about other topics such as the Revolutionary War, The War of 1812, and The Louisiana Purchase. Richards noticed that his son's 10th-grade class only talked about race, and he does not understand why the complete story of American history is not taught in schools. Richards would like to see an honest account of American history taught in schools rather than the extremes of history. There does not seem to be a balance in America, and for Richards, it needs to be balanced and focused on Jesus." He thinks, "Sometimes I think the right and left are actually a circle because they meet in the same place, and that sounds weird. The extreme right and the extreme left are violently the same people." Richards communicated the importance of America finding balance, but America has not fully caught up regarding racial harm. He believes in people living and being themselves, but he is not a fan of social topics like reparations because they can enable a victim mentality.

### **Summary**

Richards is passionate about people loving each other and treating each other fairly. His family raised him to be color-blind, love people, and treat people with respect and dignity. These fundamental traits are credited to his love for Jesus, and he seeks to impact people by appreciating people for who they are. Richards had a powerful experience in Rwanda, and the history of the Tutsis and Hutu people influenced his views on racism and reconciliation. He believes that America is the world's melting pot but believes America continues to go to extremes rather than finding balance and loving each other. Richards does not engage in social issues because that is not his focus, and we need to stop going to extremes. His focus is to love people and be the best person who models Christ in all aspects of life. Richards did not speak in

detail about the organizations he serves, the dynamics of working relationships, or the impact of social justice. His focus is not on issues that divide leaders but on how people need to get along, follow Jesus, and treat everyone like God's child. Richards communicated these statements throughout the interview because he primarily operates and understands the world from this perspective.

### **Matthew Little**

Matthew Little is a 58-year-old White male that lives in Richmond, Virginia. His father was a pastor, and he grew up traveling the world but considered Asheville, North Carolina, Long Island, New York, and various countries in Africa home. His father pastored in Asheville and Long Island and worked at a college in Africa. Little described Asheville as rural White, southern, and lower to middle-class. Long Island was more urban and White middle class. During high school in Liberia, it was a mix of various nationalities with only missionary students, embassy students, and a small percentage of students from Liberia. Sports were impactful for Little. He stated, "Sports gave you something in common with other athletes. It gave me friends of different nationalities and races, so I think that really helped. But in a way, it almost hurt in a strange way that if you had asked me at 21, playing sports with my friends, I would have said I was color-blind." When asked to clarify color-blindness, Little shared a story and said, "Color-blindness was felt, more than taught, because there was no one to process things concerning race. You look at the world as your reality, but it's not." Following high school, Little attended a Christian college in America but frequently visited family in Africa, which informed his perspective on life and opportunities. For many of his friends in Liberia, making it to college was an incredible opportunity for them, which made Little realize when you have

opportunities to do anything, you should do them. Following college, he went into corporate America and became very successful.

After spending nearly twenty years in banking and finance, Little started My Next Chapter, which focuses on helping people with career transitions. They work with about 25 fortune 200 companies and executives planning to retire and transition from their careers. They have built a strong team over the last eight years. The organization works with 65-year-old and older White executives because that is the reality of their demographic, and the leadership is majority White. His company provides executive coaching but realizes that most executives are White and must become more creative in their reach for diversity. Currently, the company is expanding to help high potential individuals and diverse employees. Little spent years at Bank of America and has seen corporations fail when it comes to diversity, which is why it is a priority for him and his organization. He said, “I think it is very important when you’re working with people that they identify with the person they are working with, including first-generation college students.” When further explaining his desire for more diversity, he says, “I think there’s a natural tendency, and I have the same tendency too when you don’t identify with someone, you turn them off quick.” Little values being able to help clients by connecting them to coaches who identify with their clientele on a personal level.

Little recognizes the challenges of hiring diversity within organizations. Little stated, “You tend to hire people you know and trust, but you don’t take the time to be intentional about actually hiring. So, it’s easier to say I’m going to hire ten people who think like me and act like me because we come from similar backgrounds.” the difficulties lie when trying to grow fast, but that is something their company focuses on, despite not getting it right initially. When it comes to racism and how it impacts hiring and organizations, Little says that his initial reaction to

defining race is culture, region of world, nationality, and color. Naturally, he sees racism in components of Black and White, but after living in Asia and other parts of the world, he shared, “It spans beyond Black and White and into Asian, Latino, and other cultures.” When it comes to racism, Little defines it “as biases on the factor of race, which is everywhere,” but he does not believe people know they have biases. Little sees it more in the White community, which is frustrating. When it comes to contemporary issues of race and ethnicity, Little believes that topics like CRT have been painted out by explicitly White evangelicals to be a bad thing. Concerning CRT, Little believes we must be honest about our past. He shares, “All of us White people have not taken the time or have been taught false views of history. It is essential for White people to learn about racism and social issues.” Little shared his frustration with White Evangelicalism because there are no efforts in thinking and educating themselves because they’re quick to dismiss the problems concerning racism.

During this part of the interview, Little became more open about the advantages he had growing up by simply knowing that he would go to college, being White, and because of the system, he knew he would be successful. Little shared, “There’s this view of the American Dream, especially being White, particularly among White evangelicals, that is completely false. It’s a dream only if you have the means and the opportunities. And if you don’t, you don’t. The Church has played a role almost in making it worse, and I don’t know how the Church changes that. I really struggle with that.” His company tries to address historical patterns that address inequalities for minorities, so they provide coaching to first-generation college students. Candidates tend to be more African American and Latino. The organization is intentional about curriculum and frameworks to better match cultures and the needs of college students from different backgrounds. What has informed Little’s perspective is a Black friend who serves in

higher education. Little seeks to understand the issues to help build out programs and curricula to serve people of color best. Little does not have much hope for the White church because they continue to demonstrate that they do not want to learn and listen so that racism ends and the Church achieves true unity.

Over the years, Little has engaged with social issues and found White Fragility tremendously helpful. He acknowledges that racism and conversations about racism can tax Black friends, but he is committed to doing his part. Organizations, books, and conferences have helped him hear from people in “different shoes” and from conversations with friends. Little admires Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s courage in addressing challenging issues and wisdom, which has shifted his mind and helped him get outside of his natural White world. However, when it comes to discrepancies between Black and White wealth, Little believes that America has a history of holding Black people down. He sees it in the recent day where White families have been able to get wealthy during the pandemic. Little said, “This has been a convenience that has probably made rich White people wealthier. The stock market has gone up, and the housing market has gone up. If you don’t own a house, and you don’t own stocks, and you’re working an hourly wage or a service job, you’ve gone the opposite direction.” If you take the realities of the pandemic and compound the hundred years of wealth discrepancies, Little believes we have taken opportunities away from Black people. Little does not believe America has given Black people a fair chance to advance and progress forward, but he hopes to be a part of the change. He advocates for diversity within his organization and hopes to have more over the next five years.



## **Summary**

Little has an international background which informs how he navigates his organization. He has been involved with several Christian non-profits and organizations and shared his tensions with White Evangelicalism and its damage to society. Little understands the value of diversity, and despite leading a predominantly White organization, he is committed to initiatives and hiring leaders who can reach their organization's diverse portfolio. One major takeaway was Little's understanding of not hiring familiar people because it keeps you from authentically being diverse. Little engages with social issues and has read diverse perspectives, attended conferences, and hopes to be a part of the necessary change in America. Little continues to learn, grow, and understand how to lead his organization better while managing tensions of building a company and creating opportunities for minorities.

## **Charles Anderson**

Charles Anderson grew up in the rural parts of Kentucky, but when he was 10-years-old, his father found new employment in Louisville and moved his family to the city. Anderson's family were casual Christians, but his parents were not devoted Christians. They were Easter and Christian attenders. Periodically, they attended two different Southern Baptist churches, ranging from 200 members to 3000 members, and the church was majority White. When his family moved to Louisville, the city was more diverse, which impacted his educational experience. Anderson's high school was 70% White and 27% Black, and 3% Asian and Latino. His friend group was a mix of Black and White people, and the places he socialized were diverse.

Before planting Rescue Church, he attended a diverse church socially, defined as "more redneck and country," which was not his style. However, after getting saved at this church, doing missions work overseas, and hearing about church planting, his passion for planting a church

became a new reality and journey he'd pursue. Anderson transitioned from the "redneck church" to Louisville Baptist Network, within the SBC network, as a church planting contractor from 2014 to 2021, which overlapped with planting Rescue Church. Louisville Baptist Network is a church planting network that planted Rescue Church. The organization is respected for its organizational infrastructure, networking, and prestige. During this time, Anderson worked with another church planting organization that helped provide resources, relationships, and residencies for church plants. Anderson shared, "Our goal is to plant over 100 churches in Kentucky. Our primary vehicle is by building funding coalitions around churches that are not loan-based funds but are grant-based funds that are paid back." Although Rescue Church is Anderson's primary focus, he is still connected to the organizations and considers individuals within those organizations' close friends.

Rescue Church is 90% White and 10% Black and is passionate about church planting, discipleship, and missions. The leadership structure is a staff-led team for internal issues and an outside team for accountability. There are no elders, but volunteer staff and an administrative team oversee finances. Anderson has external accountability and enjoys preaching and seeing life change happen from the pulpit. In Anderson's short time as pastor, they have planted two churches, which were Black church plants. One Black church plant moved ten minutes away. However, in 2020, Anderson stated tensions between Black and White congregants. "It was a recipe for disaster in a blessing kind of way. In 2020, all these folks got their MAGA hats on, and Black folks are coming to church, and I'm feeling uncomfortable with that. David built great relationships with the Black people, and it was a natural fit for them to transition to his church." Black people communicated that they did not feel comfortable worshipping with "All these Trump voters," and so according to Anderson, David's church was a blessing for the Black

congregants. Anderson stated multiple times, “It sucks because you have African American folks in your church who don’t feel like they belong. It’s a blessing to know that the person they’re with, you know, you love, and you trust. It’s a win, but how do you pastor and challenge some of these thoughts so that this does not happen again, instead, people fall away just to fall away.” Anderson wrestled with navigating these tensions because he did not believe Trump was going away in a year and a half. Unfortunately for Anderson, he does not have another Black leader within his organization that he can send people to if the same tensions arise.

When it comes to the value of racial and ethnic diversity, Anderson understands the importance of diversity within his organization. “Automatically, when you have a Black planter who is there and on stage, it helps other Black folks assimilate and feel like they can be here. When the Black representation left, we saw how it affected things as well.” Anderson believes that Christian organizations should be multi-ethnic because it reflects the world and culture. Anderson thinks, “It’s different if you live in places like Finland, where 98% of the country is White. Are you pursuing old, young, and different kinds of White people? We should mimic heaven because every space is made up of red people, Black people, yellow people, and White people.” When addressing positives about being a multi-ethnic organization, Anderson shared, “It’s a positive thing. Like the Trump thing, it’s a positive thing from the standpoint if you don’t learn from it. When you have tension points, we believe different things by nature of different cultures. Let’s lean into it and learn from each other.” Anderson understands the benefits of being diverse and said, “My church, and the two Black church plants, greatly benefitted from diversity,” as referred to and implied by Anderson, who believes that diversity is a “Blessing.”

When addressing the challenges of being multi-ethnic, Anderson shared a few experiences that brought perspective and tensions within his personal life and friendships.

Anderson said that the church did not mention much about what was happening during political seasons. Rescue Church did not address the death of George Floyd and riots, but the impact of these events affected the organization. Anderson shared, “However, when October through November 6, 2020, happened, there was a quiet withdrawal. We were also transitioning to a new space, which gave people the opportunity to shift out of the church slowly. One of the Black church planters from Rescue Church has a mainly White congregation with Black families.” The Black planter is intentional with worship styles, which Anderson believes helps with diversity, but he has not integrated this philosophy within his organization.

Anderson said, “I think our society has divided us when it comes to overall challenges. Whether you’re a Republican or Democrat, you’re Satan if you are one or the other. Because of that, we have been further divided because of race, and these preconceived notions could hinder and cause challenges.” Anderson believes that the way culture operates makes being multi-ethnic more challenging because it impacts why organizations function the way they do. Cultural differences make it challenging to be multi-ethnic for Anderson. He shared, “I didn’t grow up in a Black home, and I was sitting with Stanley Baker, who did not grow up in a White home. Because I didn’t grow up in that home, I don’t understand why this is important in a Black church. There are certain things they do, and there’s a reason why but there are certain reasons why we do things in a White church. Without cultural understanding, that presents a challenge.”

Anderson expounded upon his inner conflicts and dissonance with racism, social issues, and contemporary topics, and the discussion became more intriguing. Anderson defines racism as a “Preconceived idea based on the appearance of an individual that I assume, without ever having an educated conversation with somebody.” Anderson does believe racism exists within America and thinks it does because racism has never been dealt with by society. He thinks, “If

you ask the average Black person, do you feel like the sins of racism ended, they're going to say no, but if you ask the average White person if what happened on the plantation 400-years ago ended, they're going to say yes. And I think that's why we look at the scenario with two different lenses. The average White person is going to say, that was so long ago. Can we not just move on? And the average Black person is asking, why in the hell is this still happening to me? Why am I still having to pay the price for these things? You say it's over, but you got this and that, and I don't have any of that." Anderson believes the Church should do everything about ending racism because it is in everything, including institutions. He doesn't necessarily know how to address it on a macro level other than to break apart systematic racism. However, he believes his role is to sit down with diverse individuals, whether they are "White, Black, or brown."

These experiences and Anderson's view on racism became more evident through relationships and meaningful conversations with various Black leaders. Black leaders shared a variety of cultural differences and issues which brought perspective. The impact for Anderson was these leaders addressing redlining, Jim Crow, voter registration issues, and Black fathers having "the talk" with their Black children at a certain age. Anderson mentioned how one of the Black church planters grew up in predominantly White churches. Despite assimilating to the dominant culture, he feels the tension in the state of America. These experiences and perspectives opened Anderson's eyes to a different reality than he was accustomed to personally experiencing. When Anderson sees Black leaders lamenting over social issues and racism, he feels stuck and remembers the phrase, "I don't know what I don't know." His Black friends are between the ages of 41 to 50, and they all grew up with similar experiences; and believes every place you encounter racism plays a role in your experience with racism in your life. Anderson mentioned several times the difficulties of the last 18-months. Anderson said, "I have had more

fears working with Black leaders since George Floyd, and in the last 18 months than I have before. Just simply being White. Feeling the looks of Black leaders and thinking, am I an oppressor? I don't know if that has been an identity shift because I don't want to find my identity in being an oppressor. Knowing that has been a tone and rhetoric in society and working with Black leaders, I'm trying to know and be authentically me. I'm not trying to be Blacker in a space when I'm talking to Black leaders, or Black people. I'm not trying to be Whiter. I just have to be me, and I'm okay with who I am." This portion of the interview was impactful because Anderson shared his understanding of social issues like racism, CRT, and White fragility.

Anderson does not intentionally seek sources but is aware of CRT and listens to cultural leaders. He has many thoughts concerning CRT and compares it to arguments about Reformed theology and Arminian theology. He shared, "CRT taken to its fullest extent, in my limited knowledge, makes White people the oppressor. I think that is damaging to our children and society at large. On the other side of the argument, there are clear indicators of systematic oppression that has happened in our society. Not just through slavery, the civil war of 1865, but from 1865 to today. CRT has merit in what it claims. The truths about systematic oppression are true." Anderson has not addressed any social issues with his organization. Still, he understands that racism is a severe problem and acknowledged that there are probably conversations within his congregation going on about CRT and social issues. When addressing wealth discrepancies between White and Black wealth, Anderson believes that inequalities exist because of education, opportunities, location, and proximity to the right people.<sup>4</sup> "It's not what you know. It's who you know. If people don't have networks and resources, you have a harder time. White church planters can raise \$500,000, and Black planters can raise \$50,000, and that's considered great. In

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4. Appendix C.

general, because Black people don't have opportunities to buy homes, seek better education, and know the right people, it hurts them from progressing forward."

When it comes to hiring Black leaders, Anderson was clear that his priority was for the Black leader to understand the organization's mission, vision, and values. He shared, "I want to make sure you're in step, in line, and believe in this mission or want to believe in the mission. From a hiring standpoint, the color of a person is not going to change the key things I want to communicate. I'm not saying I don't see color, but what I am saying is that the most important thing for any person coming on my team is that they're in step and want to follow the vision." Anderson believes that social issues and cultural differences are secondary to the Black leader being on board with the mission of Rescue Church.

### **Summary**

Anderson grew up in predominantly White environments that are connected to the SBC. He is passionate about church planting, has planted two Black churches, and remains good friends with the pastors. Anderson acknowledges social issues within America but has not communicated them from the pulpit. He is on a journey and desires to grow and learn so that the Church reflects culture, which is diverse. Anderson had to navigate cultural differences during Presidents Trump and Biden elections, which brought perspective and further highlighted cultural differences concerning safety. Anderson views diversity as a "Blessing" and essential for the greater good of society. Anderson is intentional about having diverse relationships and desires for his church to be diverse. But he believes that individuals must decide whether they are devoted to the organization's overall vision, and not necessarily concerned with their experiences as Black people. He is connected to contemporary issues like CRT but does not engage with sources outside of well-respected leaders. He believes that CRT helps address

systematic racism but is harmful because it teaches that White people are inherently oppressors. Social issues and topics like CRT have created fear within Anderson to work with Black leaders, but he is committed to not allowing his fear to influence his identity in Christ and as a White man.

### **Brendon Green**

Brendon Green was the only White leader I interviewed for this project. We began the interview by discussing his background, and he vividly remembered the impact of busing growing up. Black students were bused into his schools, and he was bused into predominantly Black schools in Greenville county school district. Green stated, “Black schools were the pride of their communities, but when forced busing was done to provide better opportunities and resources, it did the opposite.” For Green, busing was good for him, growing up lower-middle class, and it opened his eyes and perspectives to the world. He played football with mostly Black players and built authentic relationships with Black people at his local high school. Outside of school, the Black and White students did not engage. Green believes that this prevented students from understanding and getting to know each other more deeply. Green was never uncomfortable in majority Black environments, churches, and contexts, and he believes it helped him overcome his fear of Black people. Green remains friends with individuals from High School.

Green shared the history of Mauldin United Methodist and how they transitioned their church to a more urban community. In 1988, the church moved from Williamston, South Carolina, a more rural and White community, to Mauldin, a more urban neighborhood. The church did not want to re-create what they established in Williamston. They desired to create something new and different where the playing field would be level for everyone. The church is predominantly White, but recently, it hired its first Black pastor in its 80-year history. According



to Green, “Most Sunday mornings, we have about 18% to 20% people of color, mostly African Americans. We are working to create positions of leadership for them, and not just sitting in the pews.” Green was hired in 2002 and has served in a variety of roles. Mauldin United Methodist desires to be multi-ethnic and is a value for the church leadership. In 30 years, they have had various forms of diversity in leadership. Green believes diversity creates understanding and opportunities for individuals to learn from people different. He shared, “I believe Jesus is for everybody, so it’s important to live it out. We have experiences that may shape our experiences, but it submits to the Lordship of Christ as Paul address— be the Jew to the Jew.” According to Green, everyone has gifts and strengths they bring to the table, and everyone has a place to share in those gifts. Green loves to worship with their Black church partners. Over the last few years, his church has developed a relationship with a local Black church, and he appreciates the joy and hopes that he experiences in Black churches. Green acknowledges the disconnect in worship styles between Black and White churches. Green said, “Black people have created spaces where they can be themselves, and not perform, and the church is one of those places that Black people have their freedom. Black people realize that their control has been limited, but it is not limited to God. For White people, they’ve always been in control and don’t need God essentially to control things.” Green realizes that he doesn’t have all the answers, and as a White man, he must exercise mindfulness not to overthrow the conversation and interject what he believes the church should be.

Green has attended a few Black churches before and identifies their worship, music, and culture. When speaking about his Black church experiences and his interpretation of the service, he said, “There’s this feeling of where this is where our hope is. Everything that has been going on in the world, we release that, at least while we’re here. A lot of White churches, it’s not that

they don't have that freedom, it's just different." Green noticed unique differences between Black and White cultures and their perspectives concerning hope and life in America. He shared, "This may show my ignorance or whatever, but for me, I think that it probably goes way back to a place where there is a hand full of places in the United States where Black folks can go and truly be who they are without feeling like that got to act a certain way. That's where their hope came from, whether you go back to slavery or not. The hope was for a better way and a better life, whether here or in Heaven.

There were times that they felt like they did not have control of being able to do those things for themselves, to have that hope for themselves. That betterment for themselves, but God could make it happen and help it. I think a lot of White people think that we can make that happen ourselves. So, therefore, we don't need God to make it happen for us. I don't know if we would voice that." Green attended a Bible study with a local Black church partner. He felt welcomed, loved, and cared for when he attended once a month when he walked into Black environments. Green said, "When I walked into that Bible study once a month, I have never felt more welcomed, loved, and cared for than when I am in there. I don't have to be anybody other than who I am. But one concern I have is— does my presence in the room change the dynamic as a White man?" Green acknowledges the difficulties of his presence, as a White man, in a Black space and asks, "Does my presence in the room alter the dynamic with me being in a safe place with Black people."

Green seeks to demonstrate enough self-awareness and mindfulness when he is around Black people and the importance of psychological safety for particular Black men. Green said, "There are certain things they talk about as Black men, where I have to sit in the corner, shut up, and be quiet, instead of trying to offer what I think is a solution because I'm a fix-it kind of guy."

The Black men communicated that Green's presence altered how they answered things in the initial years, but he built credibility and trust for them to be themselves over time. During the George Floyd protest, Green spent time in a Black barbershop owned by a former high school friend in an urban community. Initially, Black men wondered why he was there, but this experience impacted how Green views social issues and the impact of racism. Green would have naturally often been defensive, but he learned and grew in his understanding of racism because he did not identify as a racist. Green always viewed racism as an individual issue. "Racism is a matter of the heart, and if you get your heart right, you'll never have to worry about racism. If you get your heart right and let Jesus fix your heart, you'll never have to worry about racism." However, Green defines racism differently. "Racism is one group of people having power and authority over other people which leads to oppression," according to Green. Racism is a system of power set up by White men, which Green wrestles with because that was never something he was taught or considered. "Keep myself and White men in power. It was ingrained in the back of his mind to keep the systems in place because they benefitted me. Naturally, people want to do what benefits them, family, and friends. But in hindsight, how has it not benefited people who are different."

Green believes racism exists, but he denied it being a systemic issue anytime he heard about police brutality before the last few years. He shared that he was in denial or tried to find reasons for it happening. When he established relationships with Black individuals, who shared their experiences in different environments with police officers, it opened Green's eyes to see that racism exists in America. When Green gets pulled over, he shared, "For me, when I get pulled over by the police, I never ever think I might not go home. It's never been my experience. I think my insurance is going to go up." However, because of his relationships with Black men, he trusts what they communicate about their experiences. "If I did not have those relationships, I

probably would not trust what they say.” Green is seeking to understand better why systemic issues exist regarding inequalities in health care. Is it only because of racism, or are there other factors, healthcare, housing, generational wealth and covid, and how the healthcare system was set up? He shared, “Maybe I have not dug enough, but for me, I struggle to understand why those things happen, other than racism. To me, we should be so aware of the inequalities in health care. Is it only because of racism that those things are happening, or is it other things happening where racism was the initial thing that started it, especially with the way things were set up? Or how do we go about fixing that?”

When it comes to the Church’s role in addressing social issues, he wrestles with internalized systems within the Methodists organization. “We are way ahead of the game because when you’re 18-20% diverse, for the Methodist church, that’s great because the entire Methodist church is 3% people of color. We can’t rest on that, but I don’t want people to come in and assimilate. Are we doing things because we’re White or just because this is how we’ve done these things as a church?” If the Church decides to do anything about racial inequality, Green believes it needs to become proximate to Black people. “When you serve together, you are proximate and able to develop relationships with one another better. You are in a better place to understand when you can no longer say “those people over there,” and you can name them individually. Proximity is a huge aspect of addressing racial inequality and racial reconciliation.” Green firmly believes racial reconciliation and healing begin with relationships— learning, listening, and partnering with one another. Green believes that if Christians serve the Lord and others together, it creates a level playing field for people to pursue racial reconciliation. Green listens to Emmanuel Ocho and has read his book. Green recalls Ocho doing a podcast with police in California, and the takeaway for him was that “Proximity breeds care, but distance breeds

fear.” For Green, he is trying to accomplish the theory of proximity. “If I stay away from people different than me, I’m never going to get to know them. It goes back to Dr. King— they fear each other because they do not know each other, and they don’t know each other because they do not communicate with each other.” Green’s role at the church allows him to create opportunities for proximity and the church is intentional about creating opportunities for people to lead in various capacities.

Proximity is crucial and was emphasized by Green, but there is deep sadness and sympathy when he sees Black leaders lamenting over the impact of racism. For Green, an inner conflict leads him to want to fix the issues naturally. However, as a church, they have not addressed social problems. The organization has not taken any stance on specific topics because congregants are on “both sides” of social and political issues. Green shared that individuals believe racism exists, whereas others believe we need to move on from racism. “As a church, we are a community-oriented Christian church,” and Green believes that this focus keeps the church engaged with their neighbor and stories in hopes of it changing perspectives. When it comes to the answer for racism and unifying the Church, Green believes the church must be willing to look internally, accept change, and find contentment not agreeing with each other while getting along. Green shared, “We must be the best we can be as individuals as a church, city, and nation. We all have to figure out how to get along.” Green can’t recall how things were in his childhood, but many older people communicate to him how things are progressively better and that the younger generation lacks perspective. Green said, “I think a lot of White people hear that and say, it is better, and you all should be happy, and let’s just move on and make it even better. But it doesn’t necessarily deal with the things that were handed down.” Green began to unpack how things were never taught about what behaviors, perspectives, and views were handed down from

generations that inform why people think certain things about different people. “From a White person’s perspective, I don’t think we want to admit that stuff gets handed down.”

Following the pandemic, Green attended a workshop about the history of racism that addressed how systematic racism impacts America. Admittedly, he has not done much reading but has participated in various conferences with their Black partner church, focusing on being better together. They worshipped with the Black church on MLK Sunday and learned more about racial healing. The last question I asked Green was if he had anything he would like to communicate to a potentially Black leader wanting to join his staff. Green said, “For me, I think initially I would not want to say anything to them because I wouldn’t want to try and sway them. I want to see them come in who they are as a person because I don’t want to put all Black people into one category. I would want to figure out who they are as a person and then have that conversation.”

Green shared a story about a Black woman joining their team for about three years following this statement. “She was a strong Black female in her fifties and has dealt with a lot. She came on staff, and pretty quickly, from my perception, she came telling us what we were doing wrong. I’m not going to sit in the back, and if I’ve got something to say, I’m going to be respectful. So, I went to her and said before you start coming in trying to change us, why don’t you see what we do and why we do it before you try to change us.” Green admits that this might not have been the best way to begin the relationship, but they grew together and had mutual respect over time. Green communicates his desire for the church to do the work of reconciliation and working together with others. He acknowledges that their organization is willing to grow and understands the value of the diversity of people of color. However, he does not believe that

minorities who join their team should approach the organization to change it without understanding the DNA and personnel.

### **Summary**

Green spent his life committed to proximity and getting to know his Black neighbors. Whether through high school football or within the framework of his current job, he is dedicated to creating growth opportunities to understand better how to change tensions between Black and White people. Green's organization intentionally creates opportunities for minorities to feel welcomed and accepted by creating roles and opportunities to serve with their Black church partners. Green engages with leaders and has attended Bible studies, training, and events to help him empathize with and understand social justice issues. Before these intentional efforts, he defined racism as personal prejudices against another based on their skin color. However, over the last few years, and through relationship building, he understands that racism exists in America, not just within individuals but systemically. He believes the best way to address racism is by doing life with people of different racial groups. But he believes they need to work together instead of assuming they understand cultures and organizations. Green understands that Black people may not fully be themselves when he enters Black environments as a White man. Therefore, he desires to build relationships, listen, and learn, resisting the temptation to fix the issues. Green wrestles with his role in race, racism, and social justice conversations. There is an honest concern for the situations his Black friends have shared with him. However, Green's organization has never addressed social issues because the church is committed to building relationships by serving and creating opportunities for individuals to engage with different cultures. He is hopeful about his organization's relationships within the community and believes they can do a better job.

## **Randy Armstrong**

Randy Armstrong grew up in the 1960s in Detroit, Michigan, in a devout Christian home. His family was involved with two different churches growing up. The first church was an all-White church of 50 to 100 people, and Armstrong described this church as a “southern gospel style” church. When he was 11-years old, his family moved outside of Detroit to a larger church that fluctuated between 600 to 1500 members, with a racial makeup of 90% White and 10% ethnically diverse. This church was his first introduction to the Church of God denomination. When describing racial tensions in the 60s and his Detroit community, Armstrong stated, “I did not grow up worrying about all racial stuff, even though I was born in the 60s. Terrible things were happening in Detroit then— riots and all kinds of different stuff that I guess was there for me to see. But I was not affected by that, and I had friendships of all colors.” Following high school, he attended Southern Bible College as a double major in Christian Education and Music. When he graduated college, he worked for the school and served as the assistant to the president. In addition, he was the basketball and volleyball coach in various seasons, recruited students, and served on different ministry teams.

Armstrong indicated that the faculty and staff at Southern Bible College were 90% White and 10% ethnically diverse, which similarly reflected the student body’s demographic percentage. Following Southern Bible College, he moved to Florida and worked for Gracefield Church, with approximately 50% ethnic diversity and 50% White congregants. Armstrong traveled the country, engaging in music and preaching ministry across eleven denominations. We asked Armstrong about the positives and challenges of being racially and ethnically diverse during the interview. Armstrong considers diversity as a “Blessing,” and when asked what he meant by “Blessing,” he indicated that he saw diverse people as a blessing because “they added



dynamics to the group.” He used the analogy of different seasonings at ethnic restaurants to reflect various cultures, histories, and values that contribute to the flavor of the restaurant. When asked about challenges, Armstrong indicated that any challenge is personal with individuals who insist that their way is the only way of doing things. He advocated for a more flexible and adaptive approach to working with others, making room for various perspectives.

Armstrong was passionate about this point, which transitioned into his definition of racism and how it exists in America. He states, “I define racism as having something against someone because of their difference— whether that’s a different color, financial stature, or different educational stature. I think multiple things can make the feeling of a racial attitude toward someone wrong.” When asked to elaborate on what he meant, Armstrong shared, “When you just dislike them, disdain them, and lack complete honor because they’re different than what you are, that can be racism. If you are a rich person and someone is poor, racism can be there. If you’re Black and White, we know racism can be there. If you’re smarter than everyone else, and everyone around you does not, and you think you’re better simply because you have an education, then others are less than you. He also believes that racism is not “as bad as everyone tries to make it.” Generally, Armstrong believes that racism manifests in various ways and is not limited to Black and White people. He says, “I don’t only associate racism with color. I pin it to education, finances, color, and several things where you can have a very biased opinion where you just think you’re better than everybody else.” Armstrong shared a personal story about an encounter with a Black person and concluded the story by sharing, “I think we have a good country and good people, and maybe I believe in positive things. I don’t believe our country is systematically racial. I believe that America is made up of good people, honest and hard-working people, and people who respect one another.”

When transitioning to the contemporary discussions around CRT, racism, and systemic racism, and how the impact, he shared, “I don’t believe in systemic racism.” Concerning CRT, Armstrong stated, “When it comes to CRT and the things they’re trying to teach our children, if I understand it correctly, then I would say that is a wrong curriculum to teach. If I had kids in school now, they would not want my voice in these schools because I would be very much against that.” When asked about his sources that inform his understanding of CRT, he indicated “social media, the news, websites,” he did not specify beyond this point. Next, Armstrong transitioned to his issues with Black Lives Matter (BLM). He shared that he supported the phrase but not the organization. Although he stated that he visited the BLM website, he said, “I decided early on that I was not for that Black Lives Matter organization. I’m very proud of the phrase, but I’m also one that says All Lives Matter. I don’t care what color you are— you matter.”

Armstrong says, “When you study BLM, they’re not doing much for Black lives. If anything, they do more to hurt than to help. I studied the play on words early and did not fall for it.” When asked if he remembered what he objected to, he indicated that the BLM organization supports looting, vandalism, and rioting and breaks common-sense laws, and that’s the America I grew up in. That’s called stealing and theft. They pushed rioting in the streets and taking over dominion.” During this portion of the interview, Armstrong grew noticeably more intense and even told a joke to lighten the mood. When asked about his church addressing the issues of social issues, CRT, and systemic racism, he indicated that they had not addressed those issues, and there was no need for the Church to speak on these issues because they had not experienced any rioting and looting. Individuals within the congregation made statements on social media. Still, the organization had not publicly made a statement, which speaks to his views concerning racism, and that it is on an individual level and not systemic.

## **Summary**

Armstrong strongly communicated his appreciation of diverse individuals and families within the church. He views diversity as a blessing and celebrates the different flavors of having a diverse context. When it comes to racism, he believes it is strictly individual, not systemic, and as terrible as people make it out to be. Armstrong believes that organizations like BLM make things harder because they promote ideas like CRT, looting, violence, and rioting. Armstrong's sources of information regarding CRT were primarily social media, news media, and websites. He indicated that he had not experienced racism within his organizations but has in individual relationships. The organization he works for does not address social issues, but individuals have spoken about these issues through social media. Still, their organization did not waiver on its stance.

## **Thomas McDonald**

Thomas McDonald grew up in a majority White community in Raleigh, NC, which reflected his church and high school. Most of his immediate neighbors were White, except for a few families who lived down the road. In the late 90s, he attended a private Christian school that was 99% White across the board with students and teachers. His closest friends were White with similar backgrounds and upbringing. McDonald grew up in a Christian home, and his dad was in ministry and worked for the SBC. His dad led conferences and participated in various churches and SBC gatherings.

In the mid-2000s, his previous church was exploding, and the church had a vision casting meeting about outgrowing the size they were 250 to 275 congregants. The church wanted to start a contemporary morning service that would eventually plant into an independent church in Winston Salem, NC. McDonald said, "The goal was to plant once the church hit 200 people." In

2009, he was involved with planning the next church plant. Despite being deeply connected and involved in student ministry, McDonald felt called to be the lead pastor of the church plant in Winston Salem. McDonald's planted the church with 30 to 35 people, 3 Hispanics, and 32 White people. When it comes to ethnic diversity, McDonald understands the value, even though Unite Church has not progressed in this area. Their church is in the center of a minority community, and they frequently do outreach to build relationships with their neighbors. He said, "The community is largely Hispanic, and 2-3 blocks away, there are Black people." McDonald does not feel good about the lack of diversity within the organization. He said, "The hope was to use outreach to reach the people of color within a 3-mile radius by establishing relationships and drawing people into the church to be disciplined. The other hope was to serve the community with no expectations of them attending simply." His experience with people of color in the neighborhood has been different than he expected, but informative.

McDonald believes the lack of diversity has hindered the church. One primary factor is the language barrier between their congregants and the native Latinos. In addition, McDonald feels the tension of being around people who make you comfortable and are familiar. However, He believes, "It is important for Christian organizations to be multi-ethnic." McDonald is still learning and growing in his maturity and understanding of the importance of being multi-ethnic. McDonald believes diversity is essential for organizations. "Early into my ministry career, I would have said not necessarily, but after working at a diverse college, I understand struggles and blind spots within myself, that's made me more aware." McDonald's perspective continues to transform but being proximate to his students helps him expand and see the value in diversity done right.

McDonald recognizes the challenges of being multi-ethnic, and it begins with initiating relationships or “getting the ball rolling.” He believes diversity gets easier over time, and he has not had much pushback within Unite Church. McDonald thinks, “The issue is not openness. It’s a more practical concern of how do we do this? There are different interpretations of how it should be done, but I recognize that Unite Church has failed in this area. We have not been able to gain momentum to move the goal forward.” These challenges and cultural differences impact their relationship within the community. The challenges and differences address how McDonald addresses social issues. When asked how he defines racism, McDonald stated, “Racism is seeing someone in different regard based on what we can see, particularly skin color. It manifests overtly but is also more subtle within the Church and schools. I don’t have high expectations of this person because of their skin color. Or, I have high expectations because of their skin color.” He believes the overt examples are easy to identify, but the subtle examples are often unrealized. McDonald admits to contributing to subtle forms of racism which do the most damage and affirm that racism still exists in America. He believes, “The church must start with teaching and preaching. Teach accurate theology because when you teach the word of God, it is absolutely against anything remotely associated with racism. The Church must live it out in some way through hospitality. Leadership teams and pastoral staff must lead by example because it sets a standard for the culture.”

McDonald has fears about working with Black leaders. McDonald’s fears being misunderstood and misjudged by working with Black people. When contemplating serving and connecting with a local church in the same neighborhood, McDonald believes people would question his church’s motives as a White leader. McDonald believes that Scripture speaks to social issues and that the life of Jesus demonstrates his involvement with social issues. “If we are

called to live a part of society, we are called to engage in societal issues by reflecting on how Jesus dealt with people, particularly the lowly and outcast. We must key in on Jesus and how he approached society. The Christian's responsibility and role boil down to sound doctrine and relationships. The average person is more likely to help when they have relationships and have built bridges with others. When there are bridges between individuals, there's a foundation and trust established that helps with engaging with social issues." McDonald continued to articulate his frustrations with United Church and Evangelicalism. "The White church tends to stand strong against abortion but does not stand strong for how babies are cared for once babies enter the world. McDonald doesn't understand how you stand against abortion but is not as zealous to help with life outside the womb. It's the same with racism and the White church's lack of engagement, which potentially reflects the inner workings of White Christians and their engagement with society. McDonald thinks, "Christians must get dirty and involve themselves with culture, regardless of the mess/sin issues there may be. Christians love to stay clean from the dirty while casting distant stones at others."

McDonald's passion was evident, and when asked about resources that inform his perspective, he shared, "I'm aware of big-named people who speak on these issues." He leans on the knowledge of people he trusts. He reads articles and snippets of book inserts. He also reaches out to others on the "opposite" side to help him understand social issues. He only reaches out to individuals considered "mature believers" rather than random websites on CRT. McDonald says, "There seems to be a tinted glass on what people say. You see this happening with Christian organizations and non-profits." McDonald believes, "These organizations reflect news and media outlet, where if you are liberal, you go to liberal outlets, and the same with conservatives." Before, he sought resources and information from media that fit his current lifestyle; compared

to today, he sought individuals he trusts. He trusts people who have spent time investigating and researching rather than individuals he is not close to and has not done the work to understand better.

McDonald has not addressed CRT or social issues as the lead pastor at Unite Church because they have not directly impacted his congregation. There have been very few individuals personally or individually impacted by social problems or considered “CRT theorist or controversial.” McDonald had private conversations with congregants and friends who have asked about social issues. Still, publicly, Unite Church has not addressed social issues and topics because “their lives by at large have not been affected. That’s hard to say, but that’s just the reality. When something affects your life, you’re going to think more, pray more, but unless you are really in tune with the Holy Spirit, you won’t be bothered.” McDonald’s models for addressing social issues were Jesus and the professional coaches from various sports teams. “Jesus is a given, but it would have to be someone in the sports world who crossed some barriers or helped someone cross the barriers.” McDonald thinks back on the civil rights movement and a documentary about Black quarterbacks fearing entering the NFL. “Black quarterbacks were told they were not smart enough and good enough to be a quarterback, but I respected how Doug Williams and Joe Gibbs defended them.” The documentary inspired McDonald because the Black quarterbacks shared their experiences overcoming stereotypes which made him reflect because the stories did not seem real. “Someone in the coaching and sports world during the civil rights movement would be a model. During this time, things were progressing but not necessarily for minorities at the same rate they were for everybody else. This is a perfect example of his need to do much work.”

When asked about the history and the wealth gap between White and Black people, McDonald had no idea about the data presented.<sup>5</sup> “Wow! I had no idea that it was that big.” McDonald believes this is due to structures in place and collateral damage. “I think history repeats itself. You always hear that history repeats itself, and it may not be slavery, and it’s a different structure. The Black man’s cap is here in the American structure, but the White man’s cap is five times beyond that. Why? There’s no reason why. It goes back to the business structure and who’s making those hires.” McDonald sees this as a systemic framework and racism that still exists. “They just don’t look like they did in the 1800s.” McDonald desires for “Unite Church to focus on making disciples on some level more efficiently, more engaged than they currently are with the diverse community in the, and be known as a resource for hurting people of any kind— domestic abuse, drug abuse, etc.” He would like to see the members of Unite Church more invested in their spiritual walk, discipleship formation, and their role in the body of Christ. McDonald stated, “they need to take it more seriously than they currently do, which reflects the failures in being more holistically diverse.”

If there was one thing McDonald could communicate to a Black leader wanting to join his staff, he shared, “I would love for you to be here, for you to lead in the ways and gifts God’s given you. And the experiences God has given you are different from our church’s experiences, but I realize my ask is hypocritical. Because I’m asking them and their family to come into a place where no one looks like them. If I flip that question, and it’s asked of me, I try to think about what I would say. I hope that I would be willing to listen and overlook that I might be one of two families who are White. I am asking that person to do something that I hope I would do, but I can’t say I would just jump in.”

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5. Appendix C.



## Summary

McDonald acknowledges that Unite Church is not racially where he would like to see the church and expressed deep conviction and heartbreak over social issues. He desires to continue to grow in areas where he is blind. He is not satisfied with his organization being racially consistent in ten years but believes it is hypocritical to ask minorities to do something he wrestles with internally. McDonald recognizes that racism is a severe issue in America and within the White Church but is not convinced that most White people are aware or willing to talk about their subtle forms of racism. He has friends from different backgrounds who help him navigate social issues and is disappointed that he has failed to address these issues. Due to the polarization of social problems, the fear of addressing the issues is real for McDonald. He believes in racial reconciliation and defines it as: "Taking steps to admit shortcomings, bad decisions, and blind spots that lead to building bridges. Reconciliation begins with construction. You have to deconstruct yourself and then construct relationships that are different. Let others who are different know their value to your church, organization, and or school." McDonald is genuine and serious about learning more and navigating diversity within his organization and community.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **The Examination of Black leaders**

“He who is not courageous enough to take risks will accomplish nothing in life.”

—Muhammad Ali

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will examine the experiences of Black leaders who have worked within predominantly White organizations. The leaders identify as Christian and have served in various leadership roles. The interviews captured the Black leaders’ childhood experiences, their experiences with White organizations, social issues, and their perspectives on what needs to change within White organizations.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will demonstrate signs of PTSS in each leader, and chapter 8 will examine the study results. It is important to remember the nuances of PTSS considering intergenerational trauma. It is helpful to consider the implications of unaddressed intergenerational trauma, dating back to slavery, and how trauma has been transmitted from generation to generation. Consider the historical implications of chapter 3 and how it presently connects to responses from Black leaders. When intergenerational trauma is triggered, consider how it manifests for Black leaders through transgenerational trauma and PTSS’s three frameworks— vacant esteem, ever-present anger, or racists socialization. Currently, these Black leaders do not work for predominantly White organizations, and the signs of intergenerational trauma are mere reflections of their experiences within predominantly White organizations.

#### **Charles Gladstone**

Charles Gladstone grew up north of Cincinnati, where the population was 90% White and 10% Black. He grew up in an agricultural community with many local farmers, dividing White

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1. See Appendix D.

and Black people by train tracks. There were five churches in the community, two of the five were predominantly Black, and the other churches were White. Gladstone went to a primarily White school and was one of seven Black students to graduate in 1996, out of 230 students. Gladstone's friend group was mostly White, and he remains friends with many of them today. During high school, he left his Black church and transitioned to one of the larger White churches to play trumpet in the orchestra. Despite being rooted in his all-Black community outside of the church, he attended North Cincinnati Baptist Church. For Gladstone, this was his first experience in a predominantly White evangelical church. During his time at North Cincinnati Baptist Church, the church was roughly 2,000 people, and within the youth group, he was the only Black student to attend. Following high school, Gladstone continued to play trumpet, joined the military, and eventually joined DFA Church in the suburbs of north Cincinnati.

Gladstone served as an intern for DFA in the worship department during college. Gladstone was familiar with DFA, admired their worship, and was invited to serve on staff as a worship intern. His background expanded beyond music, and Gladstone was intrigued by DFA's music and arts program. In 2008, he moved his family to DFA to serve in various capacities. Gladstone was the first Black staff person at DFA and was responsible for band rehearsals, worship administration, developing musicians, small group leader, and the dean of students for the private school connected to DFA. Gladstone was attracted to the church's focus on inclusion, which he attributes to the church being under the Assembly of God's umbrella. Initially, his family felt seen, valued, and heard by the staff and congregation. There were over 100 nations represented within the church, and he loved how dedicated to excellence the church was when it came to building up God's Kingdom and worship. The organization valued and appreciated Gladstone's perspective because he was Black and in complete alignment with the mission and

vision of the church. However, after several years, he noticed that the church was not as committed to people of color as he initially believed. Gladstone said, “Voices of color were not fully represented in senior leaders, and there was more lip service than a genuine commitment to equality within the church.” The Assemblies of God and DFA are generally charismatic by nature, with a modern contemporary feel. Initially, Gladstone believed that the organization loved Black culture, experiences, and talent, but when it came to racism, injustices, and White supremacy, they divorced themselves from those issues. Several occasions shifted Gladstone’s perspective, and he realized that the church only loved parts of Black culture but not all the culture and its experiences.

Gladstone realized that outside of small groups, substantive relationships were not normative within the White culture and community of DFA. There was a lack of representation in leadership, and it became more about lip service rather than celebrating, acknowledging, and appreciating the diverse experiences within the congregation. According to Gladstone, “There was no evidence of DFA’s leadership having cultural relationships outside their ministry context.” In other words, the White leaders on staff did not have personal and authentic relationships with people of color. The leadership gave lip service but no change, which became evident to the people of color. Gladstone believes the leadership invited Black leaders to speak whenever social issues impacted America or special occasions such as Martin Luther King Sunday. For Gladstone, “It did not seem like they were committed to people of color as much as they were committed to the White people in the church.” He shares the difference in treatment. Gladstone shared that he considered the leaders and congregants brothers and sisters but felt like a distant cousins, which led to pain, frustration, and hurt. Gladstone shared, “There was capitulation and conciliation to the broader society by the church on behalf of Black and Brown

people, but no true capitulation and conciliation towards Black and Brown people within their organization.” Gladstone equates this to Robert Priest’s book, *This Side of Heaven: Race, Ethnicity, and Christian Faith*, where the parents’ position was the position of correct and the standard— whereas the children’s responsibility was to seek and pursue the parents’ approval. In other words, the children assimilated, became what the parents wanted, and pursued the parents, but the parents never pursued the children. Gladstone described his experience as a form of unconscious assimilation and acculturation because what appears to be reconciliation is simply individuals forcibly adapting to their environment. For Gladstone, “If I wanted to keep the peace, I had to move towards the dominant White standard, while the church promoted its multi-ethnic culture.”

According to Gladstone, when Black people did not assimilate or acculturate to DFA’s culture, the organization responded with spiritual abuse, language, and manipulation. Leaders offered prayers for those impacted and hurt by the church. However, they ultimately made it the individuals’ problem, not the church’s concern. After experiencing several years of denigration and gaslighting, Gladstone decided to leave. He loved the people and grieved going. But it felt like there was always a motive or agenda that he would not meet. The more he expressed himself, the more resistance and gaslighting he encountered. Gladstone stated, “If DFA desires to change, they must reckon with their interpretation of the gospel—Salvation vs. Holistic community amongst people who share a common understanding of their mission on earth. It should be diverse, and it should be expressed to the world.’ The difficulty is worth the work, but for Gladstone, Ephesians 2 and the mystery of the gospel according to Paul is straightforward and clear about diversity within the Church.

Gladstone had what he thought to be life-long friendships within his organization. However, when topics were tough, relationships became sticky. Gladstone spent most of his time helping White people process social issues but noticed they had no problem talking about Black-on-Black crime and Chicago. Gladstone believes, “White people have no problem from an individual lens regarding racism. White people generalized Black culture and used words like ‘them and they.’ However, when there were issues with White culture, those issues were relegated to the individuals having problems and not the entire culture. For example, when Black people spoke about social injustices, White people considered Black people ungrateful, unpatriotic, and lazy, which offended me because I served in the military.” Eventually, White individuals questioned their friendship with Gladstone because they were experiencing a different side of him. The more Gladstone expressed his thoughts, beliefs, frustrations, and anger, the more it impacted his friendships and influence in the church. The more he pushed back against normative topics, politics, theology, and behaviors by owning his ethnicity and identity, the more he experienced various microaggressions, prejudices, and racist comments.

When it came to addressing social issues and concerns like Trayvon Martin, Gladstone expressed his pain on social media by stating, “George Zimmerman was culpable in the murder of Trayvon Martin.” Gladstone’s concern for social injustices led to the first of many meetings with leadership about his views. The leadership told Gladstone that he was misinformed and did not know all the case facts. In another scenario concerning the election of President Barack Obama, Gladstone posted on Facebook his support for the only evangelical candidate on the ballot. He stated, “During this election, Obama was running against Mitt Romney, a devoted Mormon, and a member from the church shared that they could not believe the church had someone on staff who supported an abortionist.” Gladstone had a follow-up meeting with an

associate pastor and re-stated, “There was only one self-acclaimed evangelical Christian. The other was a part of a cult, whom the church affirmed to be a cult Church of Jesus Christ and the Latter-Day Saints, or Mormon.” Lastly, the death of Keith Lemont Scott triggered many of the Black congregants at DFA.” Gladstone knew details from his sister, who lived in the same apartment complex as Scott, and the bodycam footage was released on a Saturday afternoon. Despite individuals in the church speaking horribly about Scott and posting how the Black community was cursed, one woman said, “Why do you think there are so many single mothers and kids with no fathers?” After this interaction, Gladstone decided not to play at church the following Sunday. The White woman saw Gladstone and attempted to hug him and his wife, but Gladstone was unresponsive and said, “I did not hug her back because I felt defeated.” This encounter caused Gladstone to question his identity, calling, and purpose because people and the organization he called ‘home’ saw him as a “disruption, divisive, and a cultural misfit.”

Gladstone shared several examples of meetings he had with leadership concerning social issues, but after this situation over Scott, he met with the leadership again. According to Gladstone, “The Sunday after the police footage was released, many Black people within the church shared the same sentiment and lamented, while the White people around us smiled and acted as if nothing happened or was wrong.” Gladstone had the opportunity to explain how White people in the church do not share common memories and history with the Black people who attended the same church. He said, “I did not feel like they understood the impact of the shooting.” Gladstone expressed how emotionally disconnected the White congregants and leadership were towards issues people of color faced inside and outside the church. Despite hoping the church was authentic about its diversity efforts, the people of color eventually realized that it was a disingenuous pursuit on the organization’s part. “When Black leaders

struggled with social issues or issues with the church, White leaders chalked it up to the Black people needing to see things their way,” said Gladstone. Gladstone believes White leaders should not dismiss Black perspectives when addressing cultural differences and social issues. These experiences highlighted severe cultural differences and understanding concerning racism and social issues.

Gladstone defines racism as “A system of power enacted over one group that causes disenfranchisement— jobs, systems, housing, etc.” He believes racism still exists in America. He shared, “It is executed by the majority culture, particularly against people of color. White people have had the collective power to restrict and oppress individuals because of their color.” In addition, Gladstone shared his perspective on the 13th amendment. “Although written to elect Black people from slavery, it restricted life, liberty, and happiness for Black people simply because of skin color.” Gladstone believes racism still exists because the same systems exist today when considering examples like Gerrymandering and voter registration laws. He shared, “Racism is rooted in power and preserving power for White men,” but he does believe America is evolving in a positive direction. In addition, Gladstone gets nervous and has concerns about White men with power because they collectively hold power. He feels like America’s current climate makes White men nervous. Gladstone is experiencing this reality firsthand as he pursues his doctorate from Liberty University. However, he does believe the Church should do whatever it takes to combat racial inequality. “The Church should be on the front lines of solving these issues rather than passively sitting on the sidelines.” Gladstone believes individuals should get their affirmation as human beings from the Church. “Due to a history of silence and complicity, the White church continues to be consistent with history and silent about racism and social issues.” Gladstone shared what he has learned from slavery, Jim Crow, and the civil rights



movement and believes that when Black people cry, lament, and share their experiences, “They should not have to beg White people to believe them or consider them God’s children.” For Gladstone, “The Church needs to realize that 86% of the Church is segregated, and when Black people work within predominantly White organizations, White leaders should not be threatened if they are challenged.” However, Gladstone realized that White leaders do not like their power and ideas challenged by Black people.

Gladstone has processed the last 14 years at DFA and realized that he was hired because he was ethnically different but culturally very similarly socio-economically, theologically, and socially. In his perspective, “Coming to a multi-ethnic space has the same mind as the majority because there were not many cultural differences in the way I and the organization operated structurally.” Gladstone was in complete alignment until he began to lose his assimilation, share his frustrations, communicate the contradictions, and develop his own identity apart from White Evangelicalism. Gladstone’s openness and engagement with social issues cost him his livelihood. Ultimately, it cost him a promotion, preaching, and leading opportunities, which made him feel diminished and led to his resignation. Gladstone shared, “Nothing is more frustrating than being misunderstood, hurt, and angry.” He compared it to women who are sexually assaulted and not believed. He believes White leaders intentionally dismiss these issues to preserve power and influence in hopes that social issues, racism, and tensions concerning ethnicity will disappear. When Gladstone pushed back, leadership communicated their gracious efforts with him, and if he had problems or caused more issues, they’d have to part ways. In other words, if Gladstone pushed back, he was made to feel ungrateful or part of the problem.

What ultimately contributed to Gladstone leaving DFA was Dr. King’s weekend in 2020. Considering the controversy between President Trump and American Christianity, the pastor

used it as an opportunity to preach about the equality act and used Dr. King's speech and Paul's letter to the Ephesians out of context. The pastor turned the meaning of King's speech into a message about cultural agendas, particularly homosexuality. Gladstone had no idea what the sermon was, but as the pastor preached that MLK Sunday, sitting on stage, Gladstone felt embarrassed and complicit. Gladstone felt he signaled to other Black people that he was complicit and affirmed the implicit messages communicated by the pastor. Gladstone met with the leadership and communicated his issues following the sermon, but they dismissed them. The sermon demonstrated Gladstone's frustrations with the church leadership and their lack of awareness and cultural intelligence. He believes this contributes to the lack of unity within the church, a lack of true discipleship, the White church having its epistemology challenge, and ethnic Christianity. Gladstone does not believe systems and programs will fix the actions of people. The more the Church allows culture to influence it, the further away from the gospel. According to Gladstone, White Christians have not been challenged or disciplined in a way that God is honored.

Gladstone shared, "White brothers and sisters need to realize that God did not call Black people a darker version of White people. God called Black people to be their entire selves, not carbon copies of White people. If God calls Black people into White spaces, Black people should bring their whole and authentic selves, and it should be accepted because that is what scripture teaches." Gladstone is committed to the work of reconciliation and sees himself back in a majority-White organization down the road. The difference is that he will bring his entire Black self to the job and will not give up on the gospel that centers on humanity's reconciliation with one another. According to Gladstone, "If Jesus can take a nail, I can take a White man."

### **Summary**

Gladstone was raised primarily in a predominantly White environment and served at DFA as a worship pastor. He expressed his desire to help others understand the importance of racial healing and reconciliation and believe this happens by being proximate to each other. Gladstone was committed to his organization, and the organization loved him and embraced his family if he assimilated. He led small groups and was respected within the organization, but his influence was lost over time because of his outspokenness about politics and social issues. In addition, there was a lack of representation in leadership. “They appeared to be conscious and concerned with the emotions of Black people within their organization,” but Gladstone did not find it genuine. He realized that the leadership did not demonstrate that their personal lives reflected their organization and true “advocacy” for diversity. After experiencing several years of denigration and gaslighting, he resigned because theologically and socially, the leadership and organization was not safe. Despite the trauma experienced, Gladstone feels called to help White organizations and sees himself back in a predominantly White organization.

### **Brittany Johnson**

Brittany Johnson is a 30-year-old Black woman whose father served in the military, and their family was one of the few minorities present in Columbus, Georgia. Her family eventually settled in Memphis, Tennessee, and the population was more than 80% Black. In high school, the demographic was over 70% Black, 20% Hispanic, 10% Asian, and 1% of White people. Most of her friendships were primarily Black, except for one biracial female. Johnson has a unique church experience. Johnson’s mother was involved in the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) ministry, and their family attended a local Apostolic Church of approximately fifty people. Johnson shared, “My dad was a self-proclaimed Catholic which made for an interesting dynamic within the home.” She had close relationships within the church, and the church was primarily

made up of lower-class Black people, which complimented her family's economic demographic. When her mother retired, she made \$38,000 per year, and her dad was an hourly waged employee. Johnson loved history and knew she wanted to work in the historical field. She attended Tennessee State University, majored in History, and became the Director of African American studies shortly after college at the East Tennessee Plantation.

Johnson described her experiences at East Tennessee Plantation as unique and exciting. She saw the psychological and spiritual impact, and it became a ministry opportunity where she was able to share the history of slavery as she conducted tours. Her role became more than anticipated, and through the responses of the tours, Johnson quickly realized the emotional, psychological, and sociological implications of sharing the history of slavery. The tours were emotionally heavy but liberating for Johnson and tourists because they grew into something she did not expect them to become. It has made her prouder and more inspired her to work harder because she has an in-depth understanding of what happened to Black people. Johnson stated, "My role at the plantation allowed me to sit in a space and speak on behalf of Black ancestors, which she takes seriously. Being in my position should not be taken lightly because a lot of jacked-up shit has happened for a long time, and we must reckon with the truth." Johnson was incredibly grateful to share the historical realities of Black ancestors by bringing them to life for tourists. Johnson understands the sacrifices made by enslaved ancestors because she would not be the person she is today without their sacrifice.

At the plantation, Johnson was able to dive into the depths of Black history, and there were no tensions within the organization concerning this topic. Johnson said, "The organization gave her freedom to talk about race in a way that most people are not able to. It is a plantation that serves as ground zero for racism to be addressed." The organization allowed Johnson to push

the envelope when it came to addressing slavery and the legacy of slavery. She said, “Most recently, I was looking into how Irish people were able to blend into society. What was that? At one point, they were at the bottom of the barrel. Then over time, as Black people became the most hated in America, Irish people can slide over here. I was able to look at race and talk about how most people cannot be themselves in their regular jobs. Being here, it’s ground zero for plantation and race relations. I enjoy that thoroughly because I don’t believe race is talked about enough, not candidly.

The conversations we need to have to push us forward, we’re constantly ignoring it and say we don’t see color, which does not fix the problem because the issue is still there.” However, there were a few times when visitors were frustrated with her presentation, which led to various levels of racism and microaggressions. For example, when conducting a tour about slavery and the multiple forms of rape and miscegenation, Johnson recalls a woman speaking up, stating, “I have a master’s, and I don’t need to hear this. Can I go?” Johnson said, “Many individuals who visit the plantation seem to want surface-level information and knowledge of slavery rather than the whole story. Jones desires to reveal the psychological trauma and the damage it has caused Black people today.” Nevertheless, Johnson’s reputation was excellent at the plantation and created an opportunity to join the staff of a more prominent and predominantly White institution (PWI).

Johnson’s new job was an opportunity to climb the ladder, putting her closer to her dream job as a curator for the Smithsonian. In essence, the state museum job seemed to be the appropriate step in that direction, but when she started it, she realized that she had been duped. Johnson jokingly said, “I was freer at the plantation than working for the state museum. The state museum was heavily political. When I was recruited, I was recruited because of my candor.”

Johnson entered her new role, and after giving tours and being observed, she was asked to be less honest, which she found to be off-putting and disappointing since it was a state museum seeking to address history. Johnson said, “I was not able to talk about race in the same way I was able to on the plantation, which was a really awkward dichotomy for me.” Unfortunately, Johnson’s frustrations continued following a panel discussion. Johnson said, “I got a call from the public program manager right before I went on for the panel, and she said, ‘We just wanted to make sure that you’re comfortable with the questions. We just want to make sure you don’t overly politicize anything.’” Johnson immediately stated, “So I need to censor myself? I wrote the questions, so yes, I’m comfortable with them.” Following this panel discussion, she continued experiencing various forms of denigration about her openness and approach to the history of race and slavery.

Johnson was asked to write an article about prostitution based on the movie *Hustle and Flow*, which was filmed and based on the history of Memphis. Johnson said, “The movie is about a pimp, his prostitutes, and the things they go through as he tries to become a recording artist. I wrote a blog post about the legacy of prostitution in Memphis. Memphis is a city that has been known for prostitution for as long as I’ve been in the world. Right next to Chicago and Detroit, pimping is a part of Memphis’s culture. If you listen to 360 Mafia, Project Pat, and if you’re in tune with the city streets and street culture, then you know it’s a thing.” Johnson took a historical approach, with primary sources that demonstrated how prostitution was legal during the civil war, and you had to have a permit to be a prostitute. The prostitutes had to be regularly tested for STDs, and it was a legal expectation that benefitted soldiers. Following the civil war, it was not illegal, but it was not explicitly legal either, which reflects the present prostitution culture within America. Johnson highlighted these historical realities and catered to the Black

urban audience she was asked to address. She sent it to the communications manager, and they communicated that they did not understand the article. The manager questioned the vernacular and tone of the article and sent it for others to read. Johnson realized the museum desired to cater to a different demographic than she was asked to write for, which created tensions and personal conflict. Johnson said, “I was told that I was inditing the Tennessee legislature through my article, which says they allowed prostitution to fester in Memphis, which they did.” The manager disagreed with the rhetoric in Johnson’s article. Johnson felt as though the manager’s message was codified in appeasing donors and complying with the politics within the organization rather than being honest about topics. Johnson was asked to edit the article but decided not to release it. When it came to the murder of George Floyd, the state museum did not address the incident, and she was distraught. The organization had internal calls, and Johnson communicated the importance of action rather than tears from White people. She does not believe White people hear about these realities enough, so empathy seems inauthentic. Johnson thinks, “You have to call out the racism and injustice, rip the band-aid off, and let the air heal the scar.”

Johnson’s time at the state museum was short, and she shared in her exit interview how she was unable to do her job entirely and how the organization did not value her. She communicated that she left the organization because of the politics and complicity when it comes to the topic of slavery and American history. In addition, she said, “I could not handle the red tape and censorship that was required and demanded by the museum.” During her transition, she was a new parent and went to graduate school to become a teacher, but ultimately went back to work for East Tennessee Plantation.

Johnson communicated that she would love to see the plantation develop internships for HBCU’s and seek to get Black students involved in museums intentionally. Johnson shared,

“Bringing those voices in creates opportunities for other Black people to share the history and teach on the topic of slavery.” When asked how many Black people speak about the history of slavery or work within museums and plantations in Tennessee, she communicated that she is one of the few individuals in the industry. However, she is involved with the Association of African American Museums—most of these individuals are HBCU graduates who serve in museums across America. During the interview, I asked Johnson about how history intersected with racism and Christianity, and she shared, “I struggle with it knowing the history of Christianity, through the weaponization of the Bible that justified slavery.” When it came to defining racism, Johnson said, “Racism is a system of structures that either propels or hinders people based on the color of their skin. Racism is in court, school, real estate, local stores, jails, food, healthcare, etc. Racism is in everything. Racism absolutely exists because I witness it every day and live in a state where the confederate flag is praised almost more than the American flag.”

When I asked her about the role Christianity and the Church should play in addressing racism and social issues, she articulated, “The Church needs to be more candid about racism and racial inequality.” Johnson believes that the Church would rather be complicit and color-blind rather than embrace the truth of racism and inequality. She sees this within the Church and its complicity through the denominational divides (i.e., Methodists vs. African Methodists, Black churches vs. White churches). Johnson highlighted these realities to her White co-workers, which created better understanding and holistically impacted their organization. When they go out as colleagues, she emphasizes that she may be the only Black individual in a restaurant, which leaves her colleagues mesmerized. She believes this is due to a lack of social awareness, but Johnson is committed to consistently being true to herself in every environment. Johnson



does believe that Black people have perspectives that can significantly benefit predominantly White organizations, but White leaders must be willing to learn and grow in their understanding.

### **Summary**

Johnson is a purest when it comes to African American history and slavery. When she conducts tours, she creates a narrative that demonstrates the psychological repercussions of slavery. Johnson expands beyond just slavery and integrates the failures of Reconstruction, Emancipation, Mob's that destroyed Black innovation, which impacts Black Americans today, and immigrant history. East Tennessee Plantation is where Johnson's voice is valued but being the only Black employee often leads to other Black people questioning why she works for a plantation. The museum was ultimately not a safe place for Johnson. Due to various forms of racism, microaggression, and stereotypical language used by White leaders, she appreciated Black excellence more.

When it comes to equality between Black and White leaders, Johnson shared, "I believe Black people deserve to be regular where they don't always have to be excellent, but ordinary in the same manner of White people. Black people deserve to rest." Johnson left the museum because opportunities were not equitable, and her voice, knowledge, and experiences were not valued. One insight Johnson communicated was that Black people should not have to appease White people within the organization. White people do not understand the tensions she experiences working at a plantation. Johnson concluded by stating, "When working for a predominantly White institution (PWI), it signals messages about her to other Black people when these organizations are complicit and racist." Long-term, Johnson sees herself at the plantation because it has become safe and her voice, knowledge, and experiences are valued and respected. The organization is committed to evolving, changing, and engaging in the realities that

accommodate her role, job, and personhood. She intends to use her platform and voice to share the truth about American history and the impact of slavery.

### **Damion Thomas**

Damion Thomas was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan, and grew up in a majority-Black community. He articulated how proud people were to be Black and his community's impact on his racial identity. Thomas grew up with two sisters and his mother, who served as a probation officer. The city was predominantly Black, and Thomas recalls growing up Black as a positive trait. Still, the crack epidemic plagued his community during the Clinton administration, leading to turf wars and violence. Thomas's parents divorced when he was 12, and six months later, his mother was shot five times, which dramatically impacted him and his family. Nevertheless, Thomas's family stayed connected to their community and church despite radical transitions, which was an Apostolic Pentecostal Church of 1400 people. Thomas was a basketball player at his local high school made up of 98% Black students and 2% others. Following High School, Thomas moved to Savannah, Georgia, to attend the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) to study architecture and play Basketball.

Thomas's high school teacher recommended SCAD, and he decided to attend the school because he received a full scholarship. Thomas's transition to the south was an absolute culture shock for him. At 17, this was his first experience outside of his predominantly Black environment. He noticed cultural differences between his community in Detroit, which was open, candid, and honest, differing from his southern experience. For Thomas, "People knew what you believed in the north and where you stood. In the south, people smile and stab you with a knife in the back." When further describing his integration into the south, Thomas thought, "It felt like White people in the south still owned Black people." He quickly identified and

categorized his southern introduction into three sub-cultures— SCAD, Savannah, and Evangelicalism. Following college, Thomas became active in evangelical circles and attended Dallas Theological Seminary, where he received his MDiv and Doctor of Ministry. Thomas's upbringing was rooted in finding absolute truth, perfectionism, and attaining ultimate holiness, which countered his evangelical experience. In the Apostolic tradition, it was highly charismatic. According to Thomas, "The man of God gets direct revelation from God, reads and interprets the Bible for you, so there is no need for congregants to read." When he entered his first evangelical church, his friend gave him a Bible, which was a liberating moment in his life. The evangelical church taught Thomas how to read the Bible for himself and gave him a vision for the world and life beyond American culture. The world became accessible to Thomas, and he was attracted to the possibilities of impacting the world.

Thomas benefitted from being one of the few faces within the reformed evangelical world. There were unique differences, but leaders thought, dressed, and believed the same ideologies and shared similar worldviews concerning social issues and the gospel. In these predominantly White organizations, Black leaders fell in alignment with the normative standards, adapting to cultural norms, beliefs, and practices. Thomas experienced White leaders doing good by adopting Black kids and teaching their churches and communities color-blind theology concerning the world.

Following seminary, Thomas worked for a megachurch in Dallas with over 20,000 members and several campuses. His friend Jason did not believe Thomas realized the type of theological and political beliefs communication and it helped him identify dramatic differences between what evangelicals preached versus what they embodied. Thomas realized that evangelicals did not fully embody Scripture and taught him to practice and believe. Thomas

stated, “I thought the evangelicals were relational and wanted to see people flourish, as demonstrated in Philippians 2— consider one another better than yourself.” However, this was not the case, and seeing the true colors of prominent evangelical leaders made Thomas feel angry, frustrated, and defeated. Thomas believes Black and White leaders are tempted like Jesus to build kingdoms, fame, and worship idols of the world.

What attracted Thomas to Evangelicalism would later be a foundational frustration. There were three main disconnects between him and the evangelical church: Christianity embodied, theological worldviews on Black and brown people, and racial and ethnic diversity. Thomas’s friend Jason helped him understand these disconnects as he grew frustrated with his former megachurch, under the leadership of a prominent reformed pastor. Thomas experienced new theological beliefs and practices within Evangelicalism that addressed his experiences with Dallas Community Church and Outreach Church. Thomas noticed the sacrifices he made based on Christian principles concerning everyday living shared by his mentors that they did not embody. In other words, “They often taught and preached generosity but were the stingiest individuals I encountered.” This reality addresses the lack of awareness of racism and social justice issues, which were not addressed within the organizations.

Thomas believes, “Racism is the ability to advance one’s people group based on ethnic preference, and the ability to hinder other people groups based on ethnic preferences.” Thomas believes, “You must have the power to manifest racism, but you can project prejudice or the killing cousin,” as he refers to it, without power. Thomas believes racism still exists because there will always be a preference in America, but racism goes beyond America and happens within the same people groups. He believes that people do not understand the depth of preferences and the beliefs of those deemed superior versus those considered inferior. He refers

to Isabel Wilkerson's book *Caste* to demonstrate how problematic preference is globally. Thomas believes the American church is founded on racial inequality and says, "unless the Church repents and pays reparations, it will never be fixed." Thomas quotes Proverbs 14:31, "He who oppresses the poor upsets his maker," and believes there is a disconnect for many evangelicals concerning passages like Proverbs. Thomas believes evangelicals live in deception, believing that their prosperity and wealth are blessings from God. Thomas shared, "I believe evangelicals are impatient and quick to cancel individuals rather than reckon with verses like Proverbs, true fasting, and forms of reparations demonstrated by Zacchaeus in Luke 19." He believes the evangelical church continues to build on top of its foundations of racism, equivalence to building a house on sand. He does not see the evangelical church changing and ending racism. According to Thomas, "They continue to benefit and build their organizations off the foundations of racist theological beliefs, principles, and politics." For Thomas, this highlights cultural differences and plays a role in how he views the Evangelicalism, race, and ethnicity. Black culture is not a monolith, and Black and White leaders approach Scripture and life from various social locations.

In Thomas's evangelical experiences, opportunities did not compare between Black and White leaders. He was initially supposed to be the first Black campus pastor for Dallas Community Church but was passed over because the church leaders had questions concerning his social justice beliefs. Before the current diversity trend, it was beneficial for Black leaders to be the only Black leader because it greatly benefitted them. Thomas said, "It was the evangelical attempt to overcorrect its racism and racist ideologies by demonstrating a Whitewashed version of affirmative action." These ideologies further demonstrate how he was never allowed to be himself as a Black Christian, who brought his culture and experiences, so altogether, he left

Evangelicalism. He said, “White leaders looked out for their own people while emphasizing Scripture and using it to manipulate Black people.”

Thomas believes White leaders must understand the value of Black people. “It is a miracle for Black people to be successful.” He does not believe the spiritual and tangible efforts are currently within Evangelicalism. Thomas thinks, “White people do not understand the effort, energy, trauma, and demand it takes for Black people to be in their environments.” He does not see himself ever working in a predominantly White organization again. Thomas can only be in organizations where people have God’s heart. Thomas does not desire to put himself in environments where he must assert and advocate for his value. He shared, “I believe that White organizations cannot see beyond what they value and what they prefer. I do not believe that White evangelicals desire to truly change and develop in the ways it needs, to ensure that cultures, particularly Black people, can flourish.”

### **Summary**

Thomas spent 16-years in White Evangelicalism, serving various organizations and networks as a pastor, leader, author, and artist. When he moved to the south, he quickly recognized the differences between Savannah and Detroit. He was introduced to Evangelicalism at 17 and experienced liberation when he began to read the Bible for himself. Thomas began working in evangelical spaces and realized several disconnections between orthodoxy and orthopraxy. He was introduced to the world and missions but realized that Evangelicalism was not authentically concerned with the needs of people. Instead, Evangelicalism was more concerned with holding on to power, cultural affinities, preferences, and prospering numbers that equaled God’s favor. Thomas thinks that Evangelicalism was more dedicated to growing their various coalitions and churches, which contradicted the realities of people of color. This

perspective informs his response to racial and ethnic diversity because the focus is not on accepting cultures. Instead, it is on being trendy and having different “skin hues” present. Thomas believes evangelicals expect assimilation rather than expanding and allowing cultures to be fully represented. He believes this disconnect persists because of racism and the American church sustaining racism. Thomas grew more vocal over time, but it cost him job promotions and opportunities, leading to frustration. Ultimately, he had to disengage from Evangelicalism altogether and does not see himself returning to work at a PWI. He does not have hope in White organizations changing and giving up their preferences to ensure that authentic diversity can be achieved within a predominantly White organization.

### **Kendra Powers**

Kendra Powers grew up with her parents and sister in New Jersey. Her family was heavily involved in church, serving the church 4-5 nights per week. Her community and church were predominantly Black, with approximately 500-1000 members, but her family transitioned to a more diverse area in fourth grade. Before moving, Powers’ schools were predominantly White, but her schools were extremely diverse when her family relocated. Even though many of Powers’ friends were White, she stayed connected with various cultures and stayed rooted in Black culture through the church. In middle school, she was forced to reckon with what it meant to be Black. She was sitting with her White friends at lunch, and a Black friend asked Powers to come to sit at the Black table. For the first time, she was forced to acknowledge segregation within cultures in middle school while choosing between her White and Black friends. This middle school experience shaped her, and in high school, Powers took a trip to Ghana, which opened her eyes to the world and her uniqueness as a Black woman. Powers says this experience brought liberation to her, and she continues to reminisce on her experience in Ghana.

After college, Powers moved to Atlanta and worked in corporate America for five years as a Data Analyst for various companies. In 2016, after the death of Keith Lamont Scott, she left her corporate job to work for the non-profit Atlanta One and church South Grove Church. She worked for both organizations part-time, and this new adventure was her introduction to White Evangelicalism and a predominantly White Christian environment. Powers' friend Tom worked at South Grove Church and was her direct manager, but after three months into the role at the church, her friend Tom resigned from South Grove Church. They kept in touch because Tom was on the board of Atlanta One, and after a year at South Grove Church, she resigned. During Powers' transition, Tom shared that Atlanta One was not financially doing well. The board thought it was best for Atlanta United to absorb Atlanta One since both occupied the same demographics and funding pool. Atlanta One came under the Atlanta United umbrella, which provided a full-time role for Powers. After recently divorced, stability was essential to Powers, and it was an opportunity she believed God provided for her.

Once she joined the staff of Atlanta United, she admired the organization's desire to be collaborative, which initially gave her the freedom to share ideas and thoughts with the staff. The organization promoted equality and communicated its desire for everyone to believe they had a seat at the table. This was a dream come true for Powers because she utilized her gifts while serving Atlanta in a Christian environment. Powers shares, "Early on, developing relationships was easy because people were friendly, and I felt heard while leading the organization in research that supported local churches within the community." However, frustrations grew as she experienced evangelical politics hierarchy and realized that the leaders within the organization did not value her voice. According to Powers, "Everything within the organization was theoretical, and they talked about great things but failed in execution." Initially, Powers thought



the organization was centered on doing the work to help churches but realized the organization was more concerned with building its platform rather than resourcing and serving the Church. As a result, Powers was frustrated with the success of the organization. Powers shared, “They are successful because it only attaches themselves to successful people and platforms.” The most significant theory the organization modeled was “platform theory,” meaning “if you operationalize all the pieces of the puzzle, there is no hierarchy. Still, hierarchy and politics were evident within the organization and associated partnerships based on its actions and reputation internally.

Powers was not the only person to experience this, but women and leaders under 30 who worked for the organization experienced these same realities. There was no trust within the staff unless you were one of the CEO’s buddies. Eventually, she took on responsibilities, not in her job description— social media and communications manager and writing emails for the CEO and others on the team. After experiencing defeat, severe depression, and trauma, she resigned. In her letter of resignation, Powers communicated that Atlanta United was not safe for a person of color, females, and people under 30. During her time at Atlanta United, she was the only person of color on staff, and it lacked holistic diversity. Everyone comes from middle to upper-middle-class status and who does not leave. Powers shared, “If the organization had diversity, it would thrive. Atlanta United’s vision was rooted in John 17: 22-25, and at times, got close to accomplishing the message of John but failed.” Powers believes the organization failed because of its lack of true diversity. The tension she has is that the CEO is visible and respected around the country, but who he is as a person, the leader of Atlanta United, is deceptive. The lack of diversity made it difficult for Powers because her perspective and culture centered around White men. Powers said, “All the White men within the organization were similar in thought, beliefs,

and lifestyles.” She is grateful for the Black people who checked in on her, but she was unaware of the signals during her time at Atlanta United. Despite supporting Powers, “Black people wanted nothing to do with the organization. Although Atlanta United has great success and influence with White evangelical organizations, their lack of diversity has hurt their reputation with people of color, economically diverse individuals, and specific Atlanta communities. Unfortunately, most people have not risen and stated anything because the money and support are by wealthy White and prominent leaders in Atlanta who have a great deal of power.”

Powers appreciates what Atlanta United is attempting to do but believes the leadership structure needs to change, particularly the CEO. She thinks he needs to be terminated to be safe for collaboration and diversity. She would like to see women, people of color, and staff under 30 appreciated and accepted more within the organization. Powers thinks, “They should consider women, Millennials under 30, and diverse individuals for leadership roles, rather than the default of hiring friends who are similar to ensure unity.” Powers believes that if the organization continues to use John 17 as its foundational verse, the leaders should demonstrate and embody it. She feels the organization is too colonialistic and only targets organizations and leaders who subscribe to evangelical beliefs and theology. The organization does not reflect the rich diversity within Atlanta, and Atlanta United continues to perpetuate the cycles of toxic Christianity that traumatizes, and damages people like her. Powers’ experience at Atlanta United speaks to the cultural differences manifested during her employment.

When it came to experiencing firsthand racism at Atlanta United, she shared elements and experiences while exercising caution. She did not exclusively label her experiences as racists, but not safe, healthy, and a place for a woman like her. Powers believes she is still learning what racism is. Before diving deeper into the history of racism in America, Powers

thought racism was hatred towards people based on their color. Powers said, “I am learning that racism is an undergirding system that works strategically to marginalize and oppress people based on their skin color. Racism is not actively disliking or mistreating a person based on skin color. Still, racism allows systems that oppress people based on skin color to continue by being neutral and sustained.” Powers believes racism still exists and will always exist within America, and, unfortunately, the Church is its biggest sustainer. She elaborates by saying, “Racism exists because that’s how the United States was formed. People of color were here first and pushed off their land. In addition, people of color were brought over to build America and make it today’s economic powerhouse. Racism is sustained today because of laws to ensure that the system never changes, oppression continues, and the country remains divided.”

According to Powers, America will never change and end racism until it is no longer the United States of America. Regarding the Church's role in racism and racial inequality conversations, Powers believes the Church should be the Church by following Jesus’ example. She believes that Jesus addressed marginalized people, and the Church is responsible for caring for those Jesus pursued. Not from a self-righteous and seeking posture, but the stance of authentic love and care. The Church’s approach to racial inequality should differ from secular culture, which is often approached by any means necessary. Power said, “The Church must take the more complex approach rooted in love, but it needs to examine how it loves and demonstrate it more.”

It is undeniable that cultural differences between Powers and Atlanta United played a role in her mental health, trauma, emotions, and lack of opportunity to impact the organization and community. The most significant difference that still hurts Powers was how the White people in the organization could display and feel their emotions around topics. She was not allowed to

express any feelings as the only Black person in meetings. If Powers showed any emotion or passion, she was labeled the angry Black woman. Eventually, she met with the CEO, and he stated that she had a visceral reaction when she disagreed with statements and ideas during team meetings. Power said, “The White men were free to be emotional, but I was not allowed to have emotions.” Other cultural differences stemmed from socioeconomics and views concerning how staffed employees used donated funds. Powers witnessed donated funds spent by taking pastors and leaders out for extravagant meals rather than supporting leaders and churches who needed the funds to sustain their churches and communities. These cultural differences contributed to her resignation because it failed to recognize its toxic and demeaning culture. The organization did not consider its harmful impact on Powers because of a lack of accountability and consciousness toward racial bias, racism, cross-cultural relationships, and diverse experiences.

Powers’ experience revealed that she could not trust White leadership at Atlanta United. When processing social issues with other White leaders, they portrayed themselves as friends but were nothing more than spies and investigators who manipulated her words. Naturally, she is reserved with trust but attempted to share low-hanging fruit to help White individuals, but it failed and backfired. Powers said she found herself crying several days in a row, depressed, believing statements made about her being angry and divisive. Her experience led to internalizing and processing her emotions alone, thinking that she was unworthy, unskilled, and unintelligent. Powers said, “If it were not for close friendships with Black mentors who had gone through similar experiences, I would have accepted these statements as truth and possibly stayed at Atlanta United.” She realized that other Black people experienced similar trauma and wanted to end the cycle for herself and other Black people in predominantly White organizations. Powers believes Black people should not have to carry these burdens, which made her more

passionate as she continues to heal and educate herself. Her experience at Atlanta United does not compare to her childhood experiences, and she does not wish it for anyone.

According to Powers, “If White organizations currently have Black leaders working within their predominantly White organizations, White leaders need to wrestle with what they need to understand immediately, and what needs to change in the future.” Powers believes, “White leaders lack a proper understanding of what it is like to live in a country where you are constantly at the bottom, being told you are worthless and not good enough. If this reality exists for Black leaders outside of their working environment, they should not have to come to work and encounter the same reality. White leaders must create a safe space where Black people can feel what they feel and unload what they are going through, so Black people can bring their best selves.” The reality is that America is predominantly White, and based on her skill set, she sees herself being in a primarily White organization. Powers strongly communicated that she would never return to a predominantly White Christian organization unless the organization compensated her for leading or consulting. “If organizations desire to dismantle racism and ask her to teach it, I am willing to work there with stipulations and conditions.”

### **Summary**

Powers grew up in an actively involved Black family well connected to their church and community. She traveled to Ghana, and it foundationally shaped her identity. Following college, she entered White Evangelicalism and worked and used her skills to help the organizations. When Powers started working for Atlanta United, she enjoyed her role and felt like her voice was valued but quickly realized the organization was more colonialistic, hierarchical, and political. Collectively, the staff was not unified, and she grew frustrated with the lack of action for the theories the organization created. The organization was reactive to social issues but only

responded to social problems if approved by donors and leaders who fund and support the organization. Powers' experience led to severe depression and self-doubt in her abilities and identity as a Christian Black woman. Her mental health was due to the toxic environment created within Atlanta United, which prohibited her from being her authentic self. Staff members held conversations about her and labeled her and her communication style as "visceral and an angry Black woman." There were opportunities for Black people to be seen as leaders with Atlanta United. Still, Powers had to accept the organization's politics and assimilate to the dominant culture and framework. Even though she does not want to work for a White Christian organization, her skills and degree lend themselves to keeping her working in White organizations. To combat this potential reality, Powers started a non-profit and hopes to work full-time for her organization that seeks to help end racism within Atlanta.

### **Kendrick Long**

Kendrick Long grew up in Chicago, Illinois, with a small immediate family and a larger extended family connected to various Black Baptist churches. These church experiences birthed a love for ministry, in addition to his passion for music and leading worship. Long's mother remarried when he was 6, and he was the only child until he was 13. When he was twelve, he got involved with theatre, which exposed him to various forms of Black traditions and cultural events like Juneteenth. The first neighborhood Long-lived in was predominantly Black, but Long describes it as a bubble within a White community. Eventually, Long's family moved to a different house that his parents built, and that neighborhood was predominantly Black, except for two White families. The second neighborhood was economically diverse with doctors, lawyers, and teachers, but primarily Black. In high school, he began singing professionally with various gospel artists who created opportunities for him. During this time, he developed diverse

friendships because of theatre and its influence. Theatre shaped his cultural worldview and brought tremendous value to his ministry, calling, and personal relationships.

Long went to an HBCU and majored in Music Business with a concentration in voice. Through relationships, networks, and opportunities, he left college and became a professional singer full-time. When he was not traveling, Long served at a historic Black church that had the reputation of hosting the community and partnering with various churches and people. John Steward, the worship pastor from New Chicago church (NCC), attended and heard Long sing. Steward and Long connected, and Steward invited Long to sing at New Chicago Church. NCC desired to be more diverse, and Steward explained that the church was in an urban community, and he invited Long to lead worship. Long began contracting with NCC, which eventually led to a full-time ministry job. This opportunity was exciting for Long, and there was much prayer and confirmation when considering this job. NCC was Long's first experience in a predominantly White environment, but it aligned with his desire to see diverse people worship together. Long was the first and only Black person on staff for almost six years, but through his visibility on stage, the church did experience a surge in diversity.

The church culture was different than his Black church experience. Long enjoyed the organization of the church. He respected some of the systems and processes he believed could serve other Black churches he works with around the country. However, he believes that the White church can learn from the systems and processes of Black churches. Long appreciated the organization's culture, which was different from previous experiences. In addition to this, the lights, cameras, and platform, as a lover of theatre, sparked creativity and excitement for Long. It was a bigger church than Long's previous church. Based on Long's surface-level understanding and naivety, he said, "Seven years ago, the words "diverse church" were driving everyone, and

it's what I have been missing the most. Because honestly, I'm a person who loves the Black church and will ride or die for the Black church. Personally, as a worship leader, I don't thrive just being in a Black space. I feel like God has called me beyond that. Not above or past that but somewhere else."

The first two years at NCC for Long and his family were great, and they became deeply involved. Despite the relationship starting strong, there was an evolution and revelation for Long. Long's workload increased, equaling about 60 hours a week, without adequate compensation. In general, meetings within the church brought about cultural challenges. Long considers himself to be a person who avoids conflict but can also be bold enough to speak against injustices. Long shared, "I began to experience and understand what it meant to be neglected. Boundaries were something that frustrated me, which I had to establish. Meetings when it came to generalizing the church were frustrating. I can't help but speak up." According to Long, NCC often generalized churches by assuming that everyone listened to similar worship music and operated the same way. He shared, "It was hard to sit in meetings of any kind and hear these White people speak about the church (NCC) in a way as if the way they did it was the only way. Whether it was giving, music, decoration, and how you communicate from the stage. I always had to interject and say, well, actually, that is not the way we did it, and I've never heard it that way." Long desired these moments to be teachable for other staff members but had to learn how to pick and choose his battles. He does not know if these moments were valuable or considered by NCC. When Long shared, "Sometimes, it was acknowledged but not embraced. It was like they did not truly care about my experience or the beauty of the Black church."

Long's influence reaches different people, platforms, communities, and organizations which he considers an extension of his voice and heart for injustice. "In 2014, I was more vocal



about it. Immediately, I began to see people change the way they interacted with me. Or hear about something they said about what I posted. But no one ever came to me. Black issues and issues that are non-majority issues are politicized, so churches had a lot of clauses about the political talk or people posting. Sometimes it can be tricky, and sometimes people want to manipulate you into thinking that what you are posting is political. When all that you are actually doing is posting about humanity, respect, and love which is not political at all.” Long believes the standards were different between him as a Black person and White individuals. Eventually, NCC created a social media policy, requesting that individuals disengage with political topics. Long shared, “I felt like that telescope was on me, and I was being watched. And it wasn’t until a couple of years down the road that I realized how bad I was being watched.” White leaders and congregants were permitted to post freely about whatever, but Long believes this is why the church created a social media policy with strict guidelines. However, according to Long, “They only wanted you to post about your family, your dog, your hobbies, being on a boat, or something like that. Most people abided by that, and that made it harder for me.” This made it difficult for Long because injustices were happening to people who looked like him, and the church should be a place where these issues are discussed. Long shared, “This made it harder for me as someone who wasn’t going to just post about those things. I was going to post about real life and activities about people things outside our walls because they were happening to people inside our walls. I didn’t understand how you could disconnect that from the people you’re singing to from the stage, or preaching to, or in small groups with serving.”

Constantly, Long had meetings with the pastor or frequently received text messages about any post he made on social media. “They did not want to talk about it to learn. They wanted to talk about it and tell me how wrong I was for what I posted.” Long was invited to a

meeting about social media for their worship ministry. Long assumed it was about social media strategy because that was an additional role he held at the church. He never used the church's platform to post about social justice. He thought they were meeting about NCC's worship ministry social media and strategizing about content. According to Long, "They scheduled to bring in a kind of prominent Black pastor in the city to talk some sense into me about posting on social media. That meeting turned into a three-hour meeting, and I was livid, but not disrespectfully livid." Long had no idea but felt angry, frustrated, and like NCC's leadership wanted Long to belittle himself and change. Long knew the pastor, and they had occasionally seen each other, but the pastor has never acknowledged the meeting. The irony for Long was that the pastor NCC brought to address long, spoke frequently on social media about similar social issues and concerns.

There was another moment at staff lunch where the White staffers began talking about riots/protests in Charlotte surrounding the death of Keith Lemont Scoot. Long overheard the pastors and stated that they should not believe what they were watching on the news. Long spoke with close friends in Charlotte, who are police in Charlotte, who affirmed that things were peaceful. It then led to a conversation by one of the other pastors criticizing Long about his social media post and eventually asked Long if he could pray for him. After the meeting concluded, Long shared that another individual communicated that he was not safe to talk about social issues. Long was the only Black person at this gathering, but it left him feeling overwhelmed, alone, lonely, but he could not shake his convictions. Long dedicated himself to building the church and helping NCC progress and accomplish the organization's vision for being diverse. "Social media was the thing for years, and it wasn't because they were giving me

a bunch of grace because I was breaking the rules. It was because they wanted to break me and change the way my mind, heart, and spirit feel about what's happening in the world.”

It eventually became unhealthy for his marriage because his family is biracial, and he believes that racial and ethnic diversity brings hope and demonstrates progress. Racial and ethnic diversity is good for organizations ready to fully embody it as a lifestyle through friendship, relationships, involvement, and day-to-day life. Long felt pride in his pure convictions, but he felt guilty, which addressed the complexities of being a diverse organization. He believes that organizations must allow people to express themselves by authentically being who they are. However, it became taxing over time for Long because people of color are forced to code-switch and cater to the dominant culture. NCC often celebrated certain expressions from the Black culture but continuously fell back on the backbone of individualism. If you're passionate about social justice, culture, and doing life with other cultures, White leaders advocated for small groups but did not personally engage in those community groups. When working for predominantly White organizations, Long believes it forces Black leaders to make a decision—1) “stay because the place has become your comfort zone which requires assimilation and acceptance in the culture; 2) You accept that White people are not going to understand and you're fine with that; 3) you leave because it is not safe, it is healthy, and not where you need to be.” For Long, this highlighted the cultural differences between Black and White people, reflecting how people engage with social issues that impact Black people.

When it comes to defining racism, Long describes racism as “A system and mentality of being White (Whiteness) that is used to oppress and suppress people of color. The Church should be leading the fight against racial inequality because the church was and is one of the reasons racism thrives. Enslavers and ministers preached from the Bible, dismissing certain parts of

scripture that spoke about joy and liberation. According to Long, “The White church used the Bible to literally oppress Black people while burning crosses and protesting why they did not want their schools being integrated with Black people. The Church has always been front and center or complicit.” For Long, this is a broad generalization for a majority-White church and Christians. There were White Christians who were important advocates throughout history. For long, “The White church should not be nick-picking social issues, and Black concerns, they should be arm in arm with their Black brothers and sisters fighting against racial injustices. They are not the ones who need to be in control of how Black individuals desire to protest. White people see and believe the pain, but they do not like the way Black people express themselves, thus the manipulation by White leaders.” Long experienced this with social media and his pastors wanting him to send his post to them to process and “give him a voice and more influence.” Long did not desire NCC to give him a voice and influence because his influence and voice were more prominent than the church’s influence, but tensions continued, which led NCC to ask for his resignation.

Before Long’s resignation, NCC hired another Black leader, and they often talked about being Black and social issues. However, during a meeting, the Black leader publicly communicated to Long that he was a PR nightmare, catching Long off-guard. After attending a staff retreat the day before and receiving the terms and conditions for his resignation, he consulted his wife on moving forward. Long did not sign an NDA but signed the resignation letter. He kept records of text messages, emails, social media posts, etc. The organization considered Long insubordinate and a misfit for the culture, and their new Black hire affirmed it. He could not speak negatively about the church or staffers for 90 days if he signed the letter. He did not get to say goodbye to any staff, team members, or congregants. He agreed not to speak

about the organization within those 90 days. The church did not commission or announce Long's resignation; instead, they moved on with business as usual.

For Long, Racism can only be resolved when Jesus returns. He shared, "The systems are so deep and embedded within the country that we will not see it rectified in our lifetime." Long couldn't fully answer the question around unity because he does not find the efforts of White evangelicals legitimate and authentic. However, it motivates him to continue to inspire, do the work, and propel the world forward on the right side of history. At the end of the interview, I asked Long what White leaders need to understand about being Black within their organization. He shared: "White leaders need first to understand that Black people are not a monolith, and not all Black people grew up in Black culture and community. Generally, they need to realize how much Black people give up by working within their organization. White leaders need to understand what they give up when working for their organization. I believe the need to know what it represents and signals to other Black individuals who are bystanders. Black people have to live in a reality that is not familiar and normal for them but are required to assimilate and fall in line as if the culture is there's to live within, despite that not being the reality." For Long, White leaders need to realize that hiring a Black leader is not just hiring a face with abilities and skills the organization lacks or needs to meet a diversity quota. Long stated, "The organization is inheriting a rich history and experience that collectively built this country and the fabrics of our Christian faith. You become family, which makes you responsible for bearing the burdens of Black people with them, rather than dismissing them or reinterpreting them. Black leaders need to know they are holistically valued and cared for by White leaders and the organization, but White leaders need to navigate their path and figure out what that means and how that looks for them."

Long does not see himself ever working for a predominantly White organization again. He desires to be in a place where leaders care about what's beyond the organization. Long is not confident that this reality can happen within a predominantly White organization. He is currently at a global multi-ethnic organization and stands in solidarity with all people groups. He loves the vision and the organization. According to Long, the founding pastor retired and gifted the church to a Black pastor. For Long, it serves as an example and form of reparations. Currently, the lead pastor of his church is a Black man who is free to be his whole self without assimilating and code-switching because the culture accepts everyone for who they are as they continue to navigate growing pains.

### **Summary**

Long was committed to NCC because he believed in the organization's vision and mission. Initially, the organization embraced him and saw the literal benefit of having Long on-stage leading worship. NCC was the first predominantly White organization Long worked for, which created new experiences and perspectives regarding organizational structure, systems, and processes that he believes the Black church could benefit from within their organizations. However, Long believes that the Black church brings perspectives White churches need. In his experience, he does not think that NCC valued his experiences and perspectives. Long believes that social media tensions between him and NCC only magnified internal and cultural differences between Black and White cultures. Social media amplified racial tensions, cultural differences, and perspectives within the organization, which sought to remain rooted in White Evangelicalism. The organization had no desire for Long to engage in social media beyond their guidance. They believed his social media had political undertones. Long recalled the pastor preaching during the election of President Donald Trump and how people "are called to have

respect for authority.” The pastor advocated that people not speak poorly of the president because that was who God appointed.

For Long, hypocrisy, the constant critiques left him angry, hurt, frustrated, and deeply saddened. He was asked to resign by the leadership and guaranteed severance if he complied with the conditions spelled out in the NDA. Long complied out of need and the necessity of providing for his family, but after 90 days, he has used his story to help other leaders and organizations desiring to integrate. Long does not see himself going back to a predominantly White organization and currently works for an organization representing nations beyond Black and White people. The new church community reflects his core convictions and encourages him to advocate for his beliefs. Long still engages with White individuals who desire to learn, listen, and authentically figure out life together. However, there has been zero engagement with individuals at NCC. Long does not see the Church achieving unity or helping resolve racism. He believes the systems of racism run too deep, but he is still dedicated to helping eradicate racism and participating in changing people.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Concluding Reflections

After this, I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.”

—Revelation 4:1

I articulated leaders' stories, experiences, beliefs, and perspectives in chapters six and seven. The hope for this project was to demonstrate the impact of intergenerational trauma and its effects on Black leaders working within a predominantly White organization. Each interview highlighted different understandings of social issues, how Scripture engages with social issues, and how terms are defined. This highlights similarities and differences between leaders and how they shaped their experiences, beliefs, and engagement with individuals of the opposite race. This chapter breaks leaders into groups based on their responses and experiences. Group one is Matthew Little. Group two is Brendon Green, Charles Anderson, and Thadd McDonald. Group Three is Randy Armstrong and Michael Richards. Group four is Rashard Lewis, Charles Gladstone, and Kendra Powers. Group five is Damion Thompson, Brittany Johnson, and Kendrick Long.

Despite all leaders demonstrating intergenerational trauma, their trauma manifested similarly and differently. I will summarize how White leaders differ from Black leaders when manifesting intergenerational trauma through cognitive bias, confirmation bias, or cognitive dissonance. In addition, I will outline how Black leaders differ from White leaders when manifesting intergenerational trauma through one of the three aspects of PTSS. Black leaders appeared to understand the historical implications for social issues because it has been a conversation within their communities for decades. However, White leaders were not as



connected to the historical implications of social issues and its impact on their lives and organizations. However, we will examine these issues and how intergenerational trauma contributes to Black and White leaders' working relationships. Successfully, I demonstrated that intergenerational trauma significantly impacts leaders and organizations. Lastly, we will examine what it means to be a redemptive leader by examining Dan Stevenson who leads a multi-ethnic organization.

### **Trauma Manifested for White leaders**

Each leader exhibited signs of cognitive bias, confirmation bias, and cognitive dissonance in various ways. All leaders are proximate to Black leaders and people and desire unity between all ethnic groups. When defining CRT and sources used to bring understanding, no leader engaged with the actual book and scholarship. When the leaders shared their opinions, the information shared was from sources, media outlets, and leaders they trust who believe similarly. The data clearly shows intergenerational trauma manifested through cognitive bias and confirmation bias. Each leader understands the value of ethnic diversity, and three of the six considered diversity a “Blessing.” There were elements of color-blindness that contributed to various forms of cognitive dissonance that we will examine. Considering the racial climate over the last 18-months, five of the six leaders expressed fears of working with Black leaders. They fear being misunderstood, accused of misappropriating Dr. King, attempting to speak about something they are not educated about, or impacting safe spaces for Black people. Nevertheless, all six leaders stated that their model for addressing social issues was either Jesus or Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Each leader understood the value and importance of diversity but were unable to communicate a proactive approach to integrating diversity within their organizations. There were efforts communicated, in addition to disengagement altogether.

## **Group One**

Group one, or Matthew Little, was unique and had a slightly different experience because he had never worked for a Christian organization. However, Little is deeply connected to Christianity and allows his Christian ethic to influence how he leads his organization. In addition, Little grew up in various parts of America and Africa, which shaped his perspective. Little demonstrated cognitive bias and confirmation bias by acknowledging that he naturally desires to hire and reach individuals like him. However, Little showed levels of consciousness and growth, which helped him address the dissonance he felt for leading a predominantly White organization or catering to individual similar to him. Clear signs of intergenerational trauma for Little were tensions around hiring similar people and catering to wealthy White and retired leaders seeking to figure out their next season in life. With social issues at the forefront of America, Little's dissonance changed his beliefs, opinions, and behaviors by transitioning his organization from predominantly White to multi-ethnic. Little attempts to settle his dissonance by creating initiatives and hiring diverse leaders to reach various organizations. In addition, Little works with Black leaders within higher education who consults him and provide guidance as he attempts to reach first-generation Black students. Moreover, Little has friendships with Black people and has attended a multi-ethnic church with diverse leaders— more importantly, a Black pastor. When it came to leaders that influenced them or who they would model when addressing social issues, Little was the only White leader not to say, Jesus. Little is aware of what needs to change in his organization and desires to make intentional efforts in progressing over the next five years. Little acknowledged the impact of history and Christianity's role in sustaining racial tensions, and is actively seeking to help navigate tensions between cultures and ethnic groups.

## **Group Two**

When interviewing the White leaders, groups two and three demonstrated color-blind conservatism, influencing their approach to social issues. Although group two does not believe in color-blindness, there were elements within their interview that demonstrated that they lived within a slightly color-blind reality. Each leader unconsciously shared their proximity to Black culture, consistent with their upbringing. Each leader went to schools with many Black people, making them comfortable around Black people. When it came to social issues, they acknowledged that systems have to change, racism still exists, and all communicated the importance of proximity. Group two did not focus on systemic issues and change on a macro level. Instead, the focus was on building meaningful relationships with Black people. However, when it came to inviting Black leaders to work for their organization, group two prioritized their organization's mission and vision first and the importance of buying into the vision and mission, regardless of their race. Group two passionately communicated that they did not want Black leaders joining their team to change the organization, but those Black leaders needed to get to know them and their organizations. Prioritizing their organizations was a unified stance for group three because they did not want Black leaders joining their staff if they did not affirm the mission and vision.

Intergenerational trauma manifested through cognitive bias and cognitive dissonance for group two. Anderson communicated that he preached about Juneteenth and felt tensions preaching about something that most White people knew nothing about, including himself. He sought affirmation from the only Black person on staff, which confirmation bias falls under a form of cognitive bias. For Green he demonstrated the Dunning-Kruger effect by stressing proximity and serving with people who are different, which in hindsight, can minimize the

importance of Black experiences and perspectives. Moreover, Green's view tends to unintentionally fall into the category of Optimism Bias which is that people are more likely to assume that proximity to Black people will lead to positive outcomes. For group one and group two, they understand the importance of changing their beliefs and opinion and are convinced that proximity and Jesus are the solutions. Unfortunately, they did not recognize how proximity to Black people has not led to Black people joining their organizations.

However, Anderson's dissonance led to a slightly different result. Anderson's cognitive dissonance was inconsistent. As the lead pastor, he recognized the importance of diversity but passionately communicated the importance of leaders assimilating and submitting to the organization's mission and vision. When Anderson shared how their Black church plant incorporated different elements that fostered diversity, despite seeing its benefits at the Black church plant, his organization has not incorporated those elements to ensure that Black people feel as though they are a part of his predominantly White church community. Despite the Black planter modeling what may be required to engage Black people more broadly, Anderson added to the dissonance by promoting his organization's proud planting of two Black churches. He also communicated that he would not change who he was to accommodate Black culture and people because he did not want to be something he did not represent authentically.

In Addition, Anderson communicated that he did not engage with contemporary topics like CRT. However, He shared that he did not seek resources and engage in the discussion but communicated his perspective about CRT helping address systemic racism, but not suitable for integrating CRT curriculum into schools. This demonstrates cognitive and explicit confirmation bias because Anderson's information was second-hand, based on conversations and not personal engagement with CRT literature and scholars. This contradicted Anderson's downplay of

engaging with social issues because he shared various opinions about CRT, racism, and racial injustices. What makes Anderson's trauma more evident is the tensions he feels hearing about how Black congregants felt after White congregants wore MAGA hats to church, Black people leaving his organization, and hearing how Black parents talked to their children about encountering the police.

McDonald's wrestled with similar dissonance after conversing with a Black friend about the police and raising children. However, the most notable dissonance for McDonald was how he leads a church within a diverse community filled with Black and Latinos. Despite being in a Black and Latino community and planting with three minorities, McDonald's organization's demographic percentage has remained consistent since its planting. Frequently, McDonald communicated his lack of satisfaction with his organization's efforts in becoming multi-ethnic. One significant sign of dissonance for McDonald is how he consistently denigrates his organization's efforts in pursuing diversity. He never communicated an action plan to reach the Hispanics who live within the community. However, he did communicate the dissonance he feels asking Black leaders to do something he is not confident he would do himself. He also shared the contradictions within White Evangelicalism regarding abortion and how life outside of the womb is treated. This perspective was consistent with his beliefs about engaging with social issues. He does not believe it is fair to have Black friends and not care about how social issues directly impact them. McDonald seeks to resolve his dissonance by being in relationships with Black people, particularly his students who have helped him on his journey but still admits that he continues to learn and grow in his understanding. McDonald communicated his journey and hopes for growing and change for his organization, but demonstrated signs of fatigue and hopelessness when it came to proactively moving forward.

### **Group Three**

Group three exhibited this behavior and often deflected the questions because they did not see color. Group three demonstrated confirmation biases that reaffirmed their color-blind perspective and lack of engagement with social issues. They displayed the most cognitive bias out of all the White leaders. This behavior was triggered by their color-blind lens, which prevented them from acknowledging real issues and tensions within America and Evangelicalism. If this is the reality, it becomes difficult for leaders to understand the impact and implications of intergenerational trauma. Group three communicated how their upbringing impacted them. Despite growing up during the civil rights movement, it had no effect personally because they had friends of all “colors.” Group three leaders have worked for predominantly White organizations with ethnic diversity that they considered a “Blessing.” Richards felt optimistic about America’s future, whereas Richards believes that things have worsened in America because people do not love each other, reflect Christ, and love their neighbor. They both demonstrated signs of the Dunning-Kruger Effect bias by overly simplifying racism, its implications, and explicitly, its impact on Black people.

Armstrong displayed signs of status quo bias because he does not think racism and social issues are as bad as the media and other outlets make it. Armstrong did not associate color with racism because racism is about believing you are better than others. Furthermore, Armstrong demonstrated signs of confirmation bias when referencing media sources, beliefs, and attitudes about racism and social issues. In addition, group three does not see the value in engaging with social problems because they should not be associated with the Church. This form of status quo bias makes processing and changing difficult. Another form of bias that manifested for group three was anchoring bias. Group three anchored themselves in being color-blind and not focusing

on social issues and the impact of racism in American Christianity. Color-blindness was evident in Richards' interview as he failed to answer the questions because his focus was on people loving each other and his experience in Rwanda. Group three only saw racism in extreme manners and often mentioned the importance of not going too far "left or right." In addition, there was cognitive dissonance where they were not concerned with the impact of their trauma or dissonance concerning racial tensions and social issues. Dissonance settles for group three by not acknowledging, ignoring it, and not engaging. Group three used Dr. King as an example but felt dissonance communicating their appreciation for his work out of fear of misappropriating King. Despite hopeful optimism, group three expressed dissonance they felt concerning the current racial climate of America.

### **Trauma Manifested for Black leaders**

Intergenerational trauma manifested through signs of transgenerational trauma and PTSS—depression, anxiety, mistrust, bitterness, vacant esteem, and ever-present anger for groups four and five. The leaders were raised in predominantly Black environments but gained diverse perspectives through relationships, recreations, and unique experiences. When they integrated into mostly White spaces, they entered these environments hopeful, excited, and eager to build what their organizations desired. The leaders hoped to help their organization and were given various platforms to serve. Their introduction into predominantly White organizations was through mutual connections, which they eventually worked for or remained friends with at some point. One consistent theme from the interviews was how social issues impacted them and brought a level of consciousness and rebirth.

These leaders' experiences were between 2014 and 2016 through police brutality, racism in America, and the silence of their predominantly White organizations and leadership

concerning social injustices. Whether in meetings or on social media, the more they became vocal about the history of racism and social issues, the more influence they lost. Ultimately, it resulted in resignation, termination, or a complete withdrawal from Evangelicalism. One major highlight of the Black leaders' interview was how the organization responded to the Black leaders engaging with social issues on social media. Collectively, they were all criticized for approaching social topics in ways that made their organizations uncomfortable. Their leadership did not appreciate the approach, beliefs, perspectives, and rhetoric used to voice their concerns. When interviewing the Black leaders, four of the six leaders became emotional because they had to re-live trauma, hurt, and betrayal. However, the discussions brought hope, and they all expressed gratitude for how they have grown and healed from their experiences. In addition, the signs of intergenerational trauma do not reflect their current state, but their signs are representative of their experiences within their previous organizations.

#### **Group Four**

Intergenerational trauma manifested most through depression, anxiety, trust issues, bitterness and vacant esteem. Despite signs of depression, anxiety, bitterness, and ever-present anger, each leader communicated how their former organizations made them question their identity, purpose, value, and skills. Intergenerational trauma for group four manifested when leaders and organizations failed to acknowledge their humanity and social issues impacting Black people within American society. The Black leaders all communicated how White leaders within their organizations did not desire to engage in social issues. Every Black leader who engaged in social or "hot" topics was confronted by their leadership and eventually given an ultimatum. Each leader felt either minimized, not valued, heard, seen, denigrated, or disrespected by the organization when experiencing their experience or engaging with social issues. These



behaviors were triggered by conflicting statements that made their leadership's desire for diversity and inclusion contradictory. Each person expressed how their leadership never publicly acknowledged social issues that impacted Black people within their organization unless it benefitted their platform and influence. Still, there was no tangible evidence for group four that the White leaders personally embodied and lived out their desire to be culturally diverse.

Intergenerational trauma manifested for Lewis when he had to over-explain social issues or defend his beliefs and lived experiences. Lewis acknowledged the tensions of assimilating to the dominant preference but realized that he should not compromise his morals and care for Black people. Lewis was often the only Black leader within his organization and denomination, contributing to trust issues, depression, bitterness, trust issues, anxiety, and vacant esteem. Lewis and Powers shared an experience about emails that circulated about them, diminishing, denigrating, and belittling their character, which led to vacant esteem. Lewis shared the need to perform for the organizations and the negative impact on his mental health. Thus, contributing to depression, anxiety, bitterness, ever-present anger, and burnout from White Evangelicalism. Group four did not believe the leadership engaged in social issues and personal relationships with them outside of work and used them as tokens to justify their color-blind consciousness. In addition, they felt exploited by the organization because they justified various forms of racism and discrimination because they had diversity within their organizations and network. Gladstone was the most vocal about this and how it detrimentally impacted him because he felt like a distant relative to the organization. Thus, Gladstone initially modelling signs of racist socialization. However, Gladstone and Powers communicated the most apparent symptoms of depression, anxiety, bitterness, and vacant esteem because they were labeled as disruptive co-workers who constantly challenged and were out of alignment with the leadership. Powers and

Gladstone grew up around more White people, and the sense of betrayal was evident in their emotions and words.

### **Group Five**

Although there were signs of trust issues, bitterness, and ever-present anger for group four, group five demonstrated clear signs of depression, anxiety, hurt, and burnout. Skepticism and ever-present anger for Thompson and Long manifested when they saw the actions of leaders not aligned with Scripture, and their words were not consistent with their efforts. Powers and Johnson experienced depression, anxiety, trust issues, and ever-present anger because they could not fulfill their duties or express different perspectives in meetings. Both women were labeled “angry Black women,” which stems from historical racist ideologies, beliefs, and views about Black women for hundreds of years. Group five articulated how conversations about racism and history mainly brought conflict between them and the organization because their organizations denied the realities and truths of history that impact equity, equality, and upward mobility for Black people. For Thompson and Johnson, they filtered everything through American and Church history. They often highlighted the gaps in American history and their former organizations, but it was frequently dismissed by leaders and the organizations, which led to their resignations. For Long, his social awareness and engagement on social were constant battles because he was mislabeled as political and divisive. If you recall Long’s story, there was a meeting about social media. Unbeknownst to him, it was about his social media, and the organization brought in a Black leader to address Long, manifesting ever-present anger and mistrust. For Johnson, the meeting about the panel discussion and her being asked to censor herself triggered ever-present anger and mistrust. Groups four and five demonstrated the effects of intergenerational trauma on Black leaders working within predominantly White organizations.

The leaders believe that Evangelicalism contributes to racism in America, making it difficult to progress forward.

### **Similarities and Differences**

The interviews revealed that leaders are passionate about following the ways of Christ as they interpret. Despite various social ideologies and opinions, leaders communicated a need for the world to reflect the heart of God and the need for individuals to change their perspectives on race and ethnicity. When it comes to intergenerational trauma manifesting, White leaders fell into one of two groups — 1) White people and America needs to acknowledge the issues of racism and how they impact people of color. 2) America needs to find the balance and stop going to extremes when it comes to racism in America because it is not as bad as individuals make it. Collectively, we interviewed six White leaders, and four out of six aligned with number one, whereas two out of six aligned with number two. Ten of the twelve leaders acknowledged severe issues in America concerning race and ethnicity and affirmed that systemic racism was a bigger priority. However, there were conflicting answers regarding the definition of racism in America. One major conflict is rooted in terminology and definitions.

Four of the six White leaders held the same views on racism as the Black leaders but acknowledged that it was something they had learned over the last one to three years as they have done their work to understand better how systemic racism impacts society. Four out of six White leaders acknowledge that most White people view racism on an individual level and not systemic because the lifestyle of White people tends to be individualistically based.

Individualistic racism was clearly demonstrated by two White leaders who defined racism as personal hatred toward different people. For Armstrong, you can be racist toward people of a different educational level, financial background, culture, education status, gender, etc. Four of

the six White leaders and all Black leaders believe it is problematic to define discrimination, prejudice, and racism equally because they are very different. I find it helpful to distinguish the three because they all have unique implications and impact individuals differently.

The Black leaders believe racism is systemically embedded in many aspects of America, which continues to plague America. All Black leaders see racism as a threat to society and the Church because they have all felt the impact of racism in their lives and within predominantly White organizations. Four out of six Black leaders communicated they would never work for a primarily White organization. Powers indicated that her skills and abilities as a data analyst are dominated by White culture, which keeps her in predominantly White corporations. However, this is not the reality she desires to accept. In addition, she communicated that she would not work for a primarily White Christian organization unless there were stipulations, and she was leading the organization. Gladstone communicated that he desires to return to a predominantly White organization because that is where he feels called, but he would not enter a White organization unless he could be himself. The Black leaders all communicated that their experiences created depression, anxiety, bitterness, trust issues, vacant esteem, and ever-present anger. Racist socialization was not demonstrated by most of the Black leaders, but they have encountered other Black leaders within Evangelicalism who demonstrated these behaviors. Their organizations modeled, and continue to model, racist socialization, which they believe contributes to the growth of their platforms and influence within Evangelicalism.

The White leaders were more hopeful about the Church achieving unity, whereas one out of six Black leaders believed unity was possible. The Black leaders expressed that America and the Church need to become more realistic about their unity efforts. Even though they do not think unity is possible, they believe that America and the Church can pursue harmony. I thought

harmony was a unique way of responding, but they explained how unrealistic unity is when power is unbalanced. They all communicated that the world is driven by implicit bias and preferences, and in its purest efforts, this makes unity unattainable for America and the Church. Considering the social unrest in America over the last 18-months, White leaders communicated their fears about working with Black leaders, and Gladstone was the only Black leader to communicate fears about working with White leaders.

### **A Redemptive Leader**

I am aware of the complexities of addressing a nuanced topic, but I believe it is helpful for Black and White leaders. I hope this thesis-project creates conversation and deep reflection on how slavery created a form of intergenerational trauma for all Americans. I hope this project will create meaningful discussions between Black and White leaders working together. In Galatians 3:28, the apostle Paul wrote, “In Christ’s family there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, enslaved person and free, male, and female. Among us, you are all equal. That is, we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ. Also, since you are Christ’s family, then you are Abraham’s famous “descendant,” heirs according to the covenant promises.” Paul’s message is clear, and my hope for Christians is that differences overshadow our similarities. However, I want to share one bonus interview that I had the privilege of conducting with Dan Stevenson. It is worth considering this interview and how Stevenson demonstrates awareness of overcoming the impact of intergenerational trauma and engaging in cross-cultural communities and people.<sup>1</sup> Stevenson shared credible and meaningful insights as a White leader reckoning with the current realities in America and how churches, particularly White leaders, can better engage in conversations about racism, social justice, and the Bible.

## **Dan Stevenson**

Dan Stevenson is a 44-year-old White leader in Chicago who demonstrates what it means to be a redemptive leader who leads a healthy multi-ethnic organization. Stevenson's church, River Community Church, is a part of the Evangelical Free Church and averages approximately 120 people. Stevenson grew up as a missionary kid who lived in Venezuela, Ecuador, and eventually settled in Southern California. He remembers living in California during the OJ Simpson trial, the murder of Rodney King, and tensions around undocumented immigrants attending public schools. During high school, Stevenson lived in a neighborhood that was  $\frac{2}{3}$  White and  $\frac{1}{3}$  Black and Latino. Following high school, Stevenson moved to the east coast to attend college, and this was his first introduction to the south. Following college, Stevenson moved to Chicago and attended Wheaton College. Again, he felt redirected in his studies and focused on the local church and pastoral ministry during this time. After graduating, Stevenson moved to the suburbs of Chicago and served as an associate pastor. Stevenson shared that the congregation was economically diverse but mono-ethnic, and he struggled to feel at home. However, in 2005, his passion for building a multi-ethnic church and a good friend connected him to a more multi-ethnic church on the south side of Chicago, in which he served as the first associate pastor. Stevenson stated, "My friend grew up in Black Pentecostal churches, and he was called to this multiracial church, so I got to know him and the pastor, and they invited me on staff in 2008." This was the first time Stevenson was in an intentionally multi-ethnic community, which felt like home and reminded him of his upbringing but felt like a deeper dive into racial justice and theology. He admired the church's diversity, primarily Asian, White, but the church eventually sent Stevenson out to plant in a Black community. In 2010, Stevenson planted River Community church in a predominantly Black community on the south side of Chicago.

Stevenson's church is a part of the Evangelical Covenant Church, which informs River Community's leadership structure. The church is congregationally governed, and he sits on a leadership team that the members of the church delegate. He is the only full-time staff person but has other part-time employees—A Black woman, an Asian man, a White man and woman, and an Asian American woman. We asked Stevenson to explain his leadership philosophy, and he shared that the church's leadership team will never have a White person lead the team. He loves what the church has built over the last 14 years because they can live into many of their priorities, including doing ministry in the community and partnering with other churches. Stevenson stated, "What I love about our church is that it is a church plant, and we get to live into a lot of our priorities because they've been there since the beginning and not because we are trying to add or change something. I'm so thankful for the community we are in. There is a lot of collaboration with other churches, but as far as I know, we are the only non-Black church in our neighborhood, and we've been really blessed with friends and partnerships. We get to do a lot of good ministry stuff, not on our own, but together with other folks in the community." River Community launched a non-profit built around restorative justice with young people in high schools. The non-profit and church community centers around being racially and ethnically diverse, which Stevenson believes plays a vital role in their rationale of existence. He shared, "We have an opportunity to demonstrate something of the Kingdom. We don't hold it up as the template for everybody, but what we bring is a mix of what God is doing in our city. I think it adds an element of gospel witness to churches in our city. On a more personal level, it is helpful on people's discipleship, and being discipled together across different lines of culture and perspective." Stevenson believes that racial diversity adds to personal spiritual formation, reading Scripture, and serving people who live life differently.

When it came to racial and ethnic challenges, Stevenson acknowledged that it could be difficult because you never “arrive,” but you are constantly evolving and on the way. He shared how the church began with the small group model for ten years. The groups were predominantly White and Asian, with a few Black people attending. However, eight years ago, they paid more attention to the demographic, primarily Asian and White, with some Black people but not most Black people. Stevenson shared, “We investigated that a little bit and started a Bible study, which is not all that different from a small group except, I led it, and it was in our church office. It had identified spiritual leadership in place, and it was not in someone’s home, and it grew quick, and it was mostly Black people.” Stevenson’s tone was light-hearted, and he mentioned that this new approach segregated the church, which further highlighted cultural differences in discipleship philosophies.

For River Community, the pandemic created an opportunity to evaluate this dichotomy and ultimately decided to go to an all-church Bible study model, not in homes. Stevenson shared, “The way our associate pastor articulated it, which was a light bulb moment, was that our community group model was built on an assumption of the individualistic need to build community. It is not a bad assumption, but it tends to be more of a White experience and, to a slightly lesser extent, an Asian experience. ‘Where I’m an individual navigating the world, and I need to build a community.’ Whereas the Black people were joining the church from a communal perspective, which is, ‘I started coming to this church, I don’t need to build anything. We are the community so let’s just do the community thing together.’ The shift to the Bible study was a shift in assumptions. We’re changing not just our method here but the assumption that’s underneath it here. So, if you are here, you are a part of the community. Our method is a reflection of that.” Stevenson shared how the new method was challenging for White people but



helpful to name it despite people struggling to imagine what their community would be because there is no need for intentionally building community. He thinks, “The choice to read Scripture communally can be really helpful, particularly for those who only read it individualistically. Scripture is always going to be deeply personal, and it's always going to have a word for me, which we should never downplay. That’s been a lifeline for people suffering from anything. However, when we start to read Scripture communally, it becomes harder and harder to say that societal issues are not the Church’s responsibility. Because what is society but a collection of individuals who are impacted by the nature of that particular system or structure. So, gathering in a particularly diverse community around Scripture, with people who are being impacted by the kind of social structures of the day in different ways, makes it really hard and difficult to say that it doesn’t really matter, and it’s beyond the bounds.’ Because now, all you’re talking about is love for your sister and your brother in solidarity and joining them empathetically in their struggle. We have responsibilities toward one another because we are our brother’s keepers. These are the baptismal waters we went under together, the Eucharistic meal that we celebrate, and a sacramental experience that binds us to one another in Christ. Jesus says you now have more in common with this person than with your own biological mother and father. That’s a hard work, but also a miraculous word if you give yourself to it and you actually experience that together.” Stevenson believes when you build multi-ethnic churches, these are examples of cultural differences.

Stevenson is involved with the Evangelical Covenant Church Denomination’s Love Justice, Love Mercy initiatives which inform how River Community approaches racial justice initiatives. According to Stevenson, “Racism is race and prejudice plus power. It is the collective ability to make somebody’s life better or worse. It’s not that we avoid talking about personal

racism, but our focus tends to be more systemic in nature and how racialized systems will benefit some at the expense of others. We try to maintain the balance but tend to lean more systemically.” We asked Stevenson what informed his position, and he shared, “I think it’s my openness and commitment to learning that brought that. I think I brought more of a curiosity and not a whole lot of defensiveness around this so that as I have learned over the years, it made more sense, I believe you, so let’s respond to that reality.” Stevenson does believe racism continues to exist because of the testimony of brothers and sisters in Christ. He shared, “I intentionally name that one first because I come as a Christian person, and the locus of authority lies within the diverse body of Christ. I don’t get not to believe those testimonies. The other is significant reading and studying, mostly about Chicago and why Chicago is the way that it is. Our neighborhood had the most public schools closed seven years ago. These Black and Brown communities continue to experience these massive upheavals and things that really end up damaging vulnerable children.” Their neighborhood and community surround the University of Chicago, known for its academic excellence.

When it comes to River Community’s engagement with racial reconciliation, Stevenson shared that they made it clear they were not a racial reconciliation church for beginners. He shared, “I’m not saying we don’t have 101 folks in the church because we want to be very welcoming to those folks, but they’re going to have to do some catch-up if that’s their starting point. As their pastor, I’m happy to do that catch-up with them because we’re not going to just throw them into the deep end. But in terms of our public ministry, preaching, and discipleship, we try to be super aware of our context, which is a historically Black neighborhood—where really important work around these questions has been done for generations. We also say we choose to privilege the experiences of the Black members of our congregation.” River

Community has created safe spaces for individual cultures to process together. Still, they desire that the Black people, who are further along, are not constantly wondering if the church and ministry are for them. Stevenson believes the Church is supposed to be at the leading edge of this topic regarding the Church's role in racial reconciliation. He believes, "The Church is meant to be the witness." He hopes that Chicago can see River Community as an example of what it means to lean into racial reconciliation, healing, and solidarity. He views his church as a prophetic witness, but it is not centered on ministry but on identity. "It's about who the people of God are, and it's about constantly working out identity. When talking about racial reconciliation, we're not just talking about relationships, and we're including the material causes of justice. This is the language of solidarity for me, where we are paying attention to the causes of our mourning, grieving, and lamenting. Then we're going to put our efforts into those places as well, as a people together, out of this identity." According to Stevenson, reconciliation involves relationships but does not revolve around relationships because reconciliation has room for material justice. He began using the words, "material justice," because reconciliation felt White-centered, and often conflated the message that needed to be communicated to meet the real needs of individuals.

Stevenson can freely engage in these topics because the denomination supports them and provides freedoms for his church to engage in God's work within their community. When it comes to the role of the Church, Stevenson believes, "Internally, the Church is to be that place where there were needy people among them. I think there's a way when we talk about inequality and inequity. We have to include ourselves in that conversation. It's not the end of the conversations, but if there is no integrity to how the local community is pursuing this, then we do not have a lot of authority in actually pursuing that. From there, we want to be interested in how

we partner with God and the world around any kind of question of Shalom. For us, that kind of includes everything—the marketplace, teachers, social workers, folks invested in their communities, and politicians. Hopefully, the ministry of the Church is legitimizing all of those spaces and giving them an imagination of what it would look like to pursue racial equity in these different places.” These intentional efforts bring further clarity about River Community launching their non-profit, which responded to the lack of neighborhood cohesion. For River Community, the non-profit acts as a vehicle for people to participate in equity on various levels. It is a vehicle for people to join in something sustainable and intentional through collaboration with others in the community.

These efforts speak to Stevenson’s engagement with the Black community. He shared a story about attending a protest/march with several Black pastors from the community and wanting to march behind the other pastors to demonstrate what it meant to follow. Stevenson said, “At the last minute, I felt the Holy Spirit was like, ‘No, Dan, you need to be upfront.’ In the role of a pastor in this public space, where you’re leading the congregation out in the community, in a space that might be a little unstable and potentially unsafe depending on the police presence that day, it felt backward to me to be leading this sort of Black Lives Matter march. This was something I learned from my colleague in the community by watching them pastor their churches in public spaces and what it means to be a leader in those public spaces to provide some calm.” Stevenson shared how these experiences brought a new perspective on the Black community of clergy and how they occupied social issues and these unique environments. He credits these experiences with expanding his pastoral imagination. He shared, “I think in a lot of multi-racial churches that care about justice, the tendency when it’s a White-led leadership like myself, is to focus on what’s wrong, and to be prophetic about what’s wrong and to call out

racism, White supremacy, and I think that's all necessary. What I learned, and still learn regularly from the Black churches we are in relationships with, is that if there is not a space for celebratory hope, deeply rooted eschatological, Jesus is on the throne expression in worship, then it's probably defaulting to a White imagination of what justice involves. So, what I learned, and still learning in my preaching, is how to include that joy, hope, celebration, and how to include the call to rejoice even though it is not natural for me." When Stevenson sees other Black pastors and people in his church lamenting over social issues, he responds with solidarity.

When Stevenson sees injustices, it is difficult to separate individual cases from individuals within his community and affects people he considers friends, family, and mentors. He feels humbled by Black people and leaders who invited him into the spaces of grief and lament as they all mourned the death of the two young men. We asked Stevenson if he had fears working with Black people, and he shared, "There's always a fear of letting people down, of walking away, and not holding up my end of the responsibility. Those fears are less and less because it's more and more of who we are and what we do. But I hold these friends in high esteem, and some of these folks are a lot older than me. Some of these mentors are in their 60s, and the last thing I want to do is let them down knowing all that they have done." For the last decade, Stevenson has had Black male and female mentors. He shared how these mentors helped him better understand social issues, especially after releasing a book and being considered a CRT theorist.

Stevenson defines CRT as "a legal field attempting to understand the systemic nature of racism in America." Stevenson believes that many people are genuinely uninformed regarding topics like CRT. After reading a book by Derrick Bell, a CRT scholar, he realized that Bell was Christian and not a Marxist or Communist. Stevenson engages with social issues from a

primarily biblical and theological framework. He studies history that speaks to broader society and caters to his community's history. Lastly, Stevenson examines sociology and social scientists who do credible work surrounding social issues, racism, and culture. His community has hosted several leaders who speak on these issues, and he continues to engage and do his part to understand the implications. Stevenson does not engage in the controversy but focuses on the work he is doing within River Community and the non-profit. His hope is for the church and non-profit to continue to be present within the community and participate in God's work in the world. Stevenson hopes to see other pastors sent out to expand their community's work healthily. They do not desire to do anything fancy, but he hopes that people experience racial reconciliation and community in a way that honors the Lord.

### **Reflections**

Stevenson's interview brought great perspective on cultural differences between Black and White leaders, and he models what it means to be a redemptive leader. Stevenson understands the impact of intergenerational trauma and has developed deep levels of consciousness, racial identity, and cultural intelligence, which benefits his organization. I concluded this chapter by analyzing Stevenson because I found his story incredibly insightful, hopeful, and redemptive. In chapter two, I demonstrated the importance of having sound biblical and theological frameworks concerning God's Kingdom, humanity created in God's image, and the Church's role. Christians are privileged to participate with God and what He is doing in the world, and the Church's mission is to make Kingdom disciples. The Church does not replace Israel or God's Kingdom. Instead, it serves as a lamp post in a dark and fallen world for people to experience deliverance, liberation, and freedom promised by Christ. Chapter three intentionally narrated historical tensions between Black and White leaders, from the civil rights

movement to contemporary discussions. In this chapter, I addressed the role of Evangelicalism and its issues concerning segregation, White flight, and anti-interracial marriages that the Moral Majority justified. Next, I addressed Promise Keepers failed racial reconciliation attempts considering racial tension during the 90s. Finally, I articulated current tensions around social issues such as CRT and White Fragility that continue to impact America and the Church today.

In chapters four through seven, I demonstrated the impact of intergenerational trauma on Black and White leaders. I highlighted its effects on Black leaders who experienced severe trauma after working within predominantly White organizations. Trauma manifested for White leaders through various forms of cognitive bias, confirmation bias, and cognitive dissonance. Trauma manifested for Black leaders through transgenerational trauma and signs of PTSS, but mainly trust issues, bitterness, anxiety, depression, vacant esteem, and ever-present anger. Despite experiencing transgenerational trauma, signs of PTSS, and tensions with White organizations, this project successfully analyzed twelve leaders across America, equally impacted by intergenerational trauma. When it comes to social issues and defining racism, leaders need to wrestle with definitions of racism, which differs from discrimination and prejudice. I believe it is helpful for White leaders to consider how Stevenson approached relationships with Black people through openness and a commitment to learning. Furthermore, I believe White leaders need to privilege the experiences of the Black leaders and members within their organization.

Collectively, leaders agreed that racism was individually based and systemically rooted, except for a few leaders. However, if it were not for a few White leaders engaging in social issues and having proximity with Black leaders and people, they would not understand the systemic implications of racism. During these chapters, it was evident that leaders were in

various stages of redemptive leadership. Still, overall, it seemed as if Black leaders were more engaged with reforming and addressing the impact of social issues than the White leaders. This point makes Stevenson's analysis of Black people being further along in the process of racial reconciliation critical. Could Black people be more equipped to lead multi-ethnic organizations and conversations surrounding social issues? Should their voices be centered rather than White, inexperienced voices?

I do not make this claim as an indictment of White leaders. I raise these questions because the research concludes that Black people are more socially conscious than White people. In addition, this project demonstrates how Black people have historically navigated trauma and social issues for centuries while remaining rooted in their Christian faith. Intentionally, I selected Black leaders who were college-educated and experts in their fields to demonstrate PTSS and the effects of being a well-qualified leader who is under-valued and appreciated by their White organizations. However, due to the outcomes of this project, I believe there is room for expansion for all leaders to grow in their racial identity, consciousness, and cultural intelligence. This project demonstrates the impact of intergenerational trauma and how Black leaders are triggered when White leaders do not create authentically safe and inclusive environments. This project serves as a tool for leaders to reflect upon as they navigate the complexities of intergenerational trauma and its effects on Black leaders working within predominantly White organizations. My hope for White leaders is to consider Dan Stevenson's interview and the understanding he demonstrates concerning building healthy multi-ethnic organizations and collaborating with Black leaders. This is the beginning of exciting research, and my work will continue, but I pray that God illuminates His will for our lives, families, will, and mission for the body of Christ.



## **Appendix A: Cognitive Bias**

### **How to Identify Cognitive Bias: 12 Examples of Cognitive Bias**

1. **Confirmation Bias.** This type of bias refers to the tendency to seek out information that supports something you already believe and is a particularly pernicious subset of cognitive bias—you remember the hits and forget the misses, which is a flaw in human reasoning. People will cue into things that matter to them, and dismiss the things that don't, often leading to the "ostrich effect," where a subject buries their head in the sand to avoid information that may disprove their original point.
2. **The Dunning-Kruger Effect.** This bias refers to how people perceive a concept or event to be simplistic just because their knowledge about it may be simple or lacking—the less you know about something, the less complicated it may appear. However, this form of bias limits curiosity—people don't feel the need to explore a concept further because it appears simplistic to them. This bias can also lead people to think they are smarter than they are because they have reduced a complex idea to a simplistic understanding.
3. **In-Group Bias.** This type of bias refers to how people are more likely to support or believe someone within their social group than an outsider. This bias removes objectivity from any sort of selection or hiring process, as we tend to favor those we know and want to help.
4. **Self-Serving Bias.** A self-serving bias is an assumption that good things happen to us when we've done all the right things, but bad things happen to us because of circumstances outside our control or things other people support. This bias tends to blame outside circumstances for bad situations rather than taking personal responsibility.
5. **Availability Bias.** Also known as the availability heuristic, this bias refers to the tendency to use the information we can quickly recall when evaluating a topic or idea—even if this information is not the best representation of the topic or idea. Using this mental shortcut, we deem the information we can most easily recall as valid and ignore alternative solutions or opinions.
6. **Fundamental Attribution Error.** This bias refers to the tendency to attribute someone's behaviors to existing, unfounded stereotypes while attributing our own similar behavior to external factors. For instance, when someone on your team is late to an important meeting, you may assume that they are lazy or lacking motivation without considering internal and external factors like an illness or traffic accident that led to the tardiness. However, when you are running late because of a flat tire, you expect others to attribute the error to the external factor (flat tire) rather than your behavior.
7. **Hindsight Bias.** Hindsight bias, also known as the knew-it-all-along effect, is when people perceive events to be more predictable after they happen. With this bias, people overestimate their ability to predict an outcome, even though the information they had at the time would not have led them to the correct outcome. This type of bias often happens in sports and world affairs. Hindsight bias can lead to overconfidence in one's ability to predict future results.

- 8.** Anchoring Bias. The anchoring bias, also known as focalism or the anchoring effect, pertains to those who rely too heavily on the first piece of information individuals receive—an “anchoring” fact— and base all subsequent judgments or opinions on this fact.
- 9.** Optimism Bias. This bias refers to how we as humans are more likely to estimate a positive outcome if we are in a good mood.
- 10.** Pessimism Bias. This bias refers to how we as humans are more likely to estimate a negative outcome if we are in a bad mood.
- 11.** The halo effect. This bias refers to the tendency to allow our impression of a person, company, or business in one domain to influence our overall impression of the person or entity. For instance, a consumer who enjoys the performance of a microwave that they bought from a specific brand is more likely to purchase other products from that brand because of their positive experience with the microwave.
- 12.** Status quo bias. The status quo bias refers to keeping things in their current state while regarding any type of change as a loss. This bias results in the difficulty to process or accept change.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Masterclass Staff, “How to Identify Cognitive Bias: 12 Examples of Cognitive Bias,” (Masterclass, November 8, 2020, accessed August 2, 2021), <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-identify-cognitive-bias#what-is-cognitive-bias>.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT**

Project Title: Understanding Intergenerational Trauma and its Effects on Black leaders Working within Predominantly White Organizations

Principal Investigator: Sanchez Fair, D. Min

Secondary Interviewers: Tim Nicodemus and Justin Bouldin

D.Min Mentor: Dr. Robert Mayer

D.Min Reader: Dr. Rodney Cooper

#### **PURPOSE**

This interview is a research study. This research study aims to help leaders better understand the impact of intergenerational trauma between Black and White leaders working within predominantly White organizations. This consent form purposes to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. You may ask any questions about the research, what you will be asked to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the study or this form that is not clear.

We invite you to participate in this research study because you are a leader within a predominantly White organization or have been employed by such organizations seeking to become multi-ethnic. This research aims to demonstrate the interpersonal relationships between White and Black leaders, regardless of the diverse outcomes within the predominantly White organization. Participants are chosen based on personal relationships, experiences, and testimonies when transitioning from a primarily White organization to a multi-ethnic environment.

#### **PROCEDURES**

Your involvement will last for approximately 60-90 minutes via zoom if you agree to participate. The interview will be recorded and evaluated for further analysis, ensuring that access is limited and exclusive for the sake of this project. Individuals who have access to interviews conducted are the principal investigator, the D. Min mentor and reader, and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Each interview will not be used for any other purpose than to demonstrate the impact and importance of the thesis project.

The following procedures are involved in this study. First, leaders will have an informal time to catch up, speak about the expectations, and review this consent form which ensures and protects the integrity and privacy of the conversation. The interviewer will read through the questions and take any notes that are pertinent to the discussion, and report back to the principal investigator.

#### **RISKS**

The possible risks associated with participating in this research project are as follows. The conversation may bring up emotions that have not been addressed for some individuals. We

acknowledge and encourage periodical breaks if there is psychological, emotional, or re-lived trauma experienced during the session. The questions are designed to minimize any risk, trauma, or psychological issues, but if the participant displays any signs, the interviewer will exercise caution and end the interview. It is within the right of the participant to terminate the discussion.

## **BENEFITS**

The potential personal benefits that may occur due to your participation in this study will help you navigate potential barriers between Black and White leaders and move forward successfully in building a multi-ethnic organization. Many factors have been examined, including an in-depth theological and historical analysis that will help participants explore the impact of intergenerational trauma and its effects within their organization.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Records of participation in this research project will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. These records will be saved in a password-protected folder. The zoom recordings will be held confidential in a secure folder that will be transferred to a secondary hard drive. The secure hard drive is password-protected and encrypted. The only individuals with access to this information are the principal investigator, D. Min, mentor and reader, and the IRB of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Each participant will be given an exclusive zoom link shared by the interviewers. Each link will automatically record, and the only individual with access to the recording will be the principal investigator. Interviewers are not permitted to take notes from the interviews, and secondary interviewers will not have access to interview recordings. In the event of any report or publication from this study, the participant's identity, and organization, will not be disclosed. Results will be reported in a summarized manner in such a way that you cannot be identified.

## **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

Taking part in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you agree to participate in this study, you may stop participating at any time. Suppose you decide not to participate or stop participating at any time. In that case, your decision will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled. However, all recordings will be immediately destroyed, including the study results, and withdrawn if you decide to withdraw from the project.

## **QUESTIONS**

Questions are encouraged. If you have any questions about this research project, please contact Sanchez Fair (919)-590-0487, [kfair@gordonconwell.edu](mailto:kfair@gordonconwell.edu). In addition, if you have questions

about your rights as a participant, please contact the Co-Chair of the Institutional Review Board, Dr. David A. Currie, at: dcurrie@gordonconwell.edu or 978-646-4176.

Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to participate in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Participant's Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

### **RESEARCHER STATEMENT**

I have discussed the above points with the participant. As a result, it is my opinion that the participant understands the risks, benefits, and procedures involved with participation in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Researcher)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

## **APPENDIX C**

### **QUESTIONS FOR WHITE LEADERS**

#### **Preliminary Questions:**

1. What is your name?
2. What is the name of the organization you will be speaking about?
3. What is your age?
4. What is/was your tenure at the organization?

#### **Introduction**

1. Can you briefly tell me about where you grew up, your family life, friendships, and general experiences?
2. During high school, was the neighborhood where you lived racially diverse? Which racial groups (e.g., Blacks, Whites, Asians, Latinos) were represented? What was the approximate proportion of each group?
3. How about your high school? Was it racially diverse? Which racial groups were represented? What was the approximate proportion of each group?
4. What was the racial makeup of your closest friends in high school, church, and neighborhood?
5. Did you grow up in a Christian home?
6. If so, how would you describe (your childhood church)?
  - a. What was the denomination of this church?
  - b. What was the racial composition of this church?
  - c. Approximately how many people attended this church?

#### **General Questions**

1. What first attracted you to your organization?
2. Were you involved beyond your role on staff?
3. Do you feel like you have a group of close friends at your organization? Would you say they are your closest friends, or do you have closer friends outside of church?

#### **Organizational Structure**

1. What was your organization like when you first came?
  - a. What was the racial composition at that time?
  - b. How has that differed today?
  - c. What about the leadership structure? Was it like how it is now?
2. What do (did) you enjoy about being at your organization?
3. What do you think about the racial/ethnic diversity at your organization? In your opinion, what does this add to the organization? Does it make anything more difficult?
4. Do you think it is important for Christian organizations, in general, to be multi-ethnic? Explain further.
5. What are the positives of being multi-ethnic?
6. What are the challenges of being multi-ethnic?

#### **Phase I: Racial Attitudes**

1. How would you define racism?
2. Does racism still exist in the United States? Why do you think it still/no longer exists?
3. What, if anything, should the church do about racial inequality?

4. How would you define racial reconciliation?
5. How has your organization approached and addressed the topic of racial healing (reconciliation)?
  - a. Do you see it evolving or stalling? How and why?

#### **Phase II Questions**

1. What cultural differences have you learned about working with Black leaders within your organization?
2. When you see Black pastors/leaders lamenting over the impact of racism, how does that make you feel?
3. Do you have fears working with Black people?
  - a. If so, what are they?
4. In your opinion, how does Scripture speak to social issues, and what is the role of a Christian?

#### **Phase III Questions**

1. What resources do you use to inform you on social issues like racism, CRT, and White Fragility?
2. What are your thoughts on CRT and White Fragility?
  - a. How do you define CRT, and what sources have or do you use to inform your beliefs concerning CRT?
  - b. How have these topics impacted your organization?
  - c. Does your organization address these topics? If so, what sources do you use to support your position?
3. When it comes to addressing social issues, if you could model anyone from the past, who would it be and why?
4. Research demonstrates that when it comes to net worth, Whites have an average net worth of \$179,000, and Blacks have an average net worth of \$24,000. Why do you think this exists, and what is the cause of this?

#### **Concluding Questions**

1. Where would you like to see your organization in five years?
2. What would it be if you could communicate one thing to a Black leader wanting to join your staff?
3. Who are leaders and authors that influence you?

## **APPENDIX D**

### **QUESTIONS FOR BLACK LEADERS**

#### **Preliminary Questions:**

1. What is your name?
2. What is the name of the organization you will be speaking about?
3. What is your race?
4. What is your age?
5. What is/was your tenure at the organization?

#### **Introduction**

1. Can you briefly tell me about where you grew up, your family life, friendships, and general experience?
  - a. What environments did you grow up in?
2. How about your high school? Was it racially diverse? Which racial groups were represented? What was the approximate proportion of each group?
3. What was the racial makeup of your closest friends in high school, church, and neighborhood?
4. Did you grow up in a Christian home?
5. If so, how would you describe (your childhood church)?
  - a. What was the denomination of this church?
  - b. What was the racial composition of this church?
  - c. Approximately how many people attended this church?

#### **General Questions**

1. What first attracted you to your organization?
2. Were you involved beyond your role on staff?
3. What do (did) you enjoy about being at your organization?
4. Do (did) you have any frustrations? What were/are they?
5. What are things that you'd like to see changed within your organization?
6. Have you ever thought about leaving your organization? If so, what were the main factors in considering leaving? What made you decide to stay?
7. What do you think about the racial/ethnic diversity at your organization? In your opinion, what does this add to the church? Does it make anything more difficult?
8. Do you feel like you have a group of close friends at your organization? Would you say they are your closest friends, or do you have closer friends outside of church?
9. As one of the first or few Black leaders, when you began, did you feel welcomed and supported by the congregation?

#### **Phase I Questions**

1. How would you define racism?
2. Does racism still exist in the United States? Why do you think it still/no longer exists?
3. What, if anything, should the church do about racial inequality?
4. What cultural differences do you see within your organization between Black and White leaders?
  - a. Are these differences celebrated or tolerated?
  - b. With these differences, how do they impact you directly?



5. How does your current environment in the organization differ from your upbringing and community outside of your organization?
6. Have you experienced racism within your organization? If so, how did it make you feel?
  - a. Can you give examples?
7. Were there any conflicts or concerns about Black leaders being on staff within the organization or Black culture impacting/influencing the organization?
8. *If applicable*: Why did you leave your organization(s)?
9. What do you think is the answer to racism and the Church being unified?

#### **Phase II Questions**

1. When it comes to social issues, police brutality, racism, and White supremacy, how does (did) your organization address these issues?
2. How do (have) you processed social issues within your organization? Have you ever processed with fellow White staff people?
3. When it comes to social justice or injustice, does/did your organization address the issues? If so, how did it make you feel? If not, how did it make you feel?
4. How has the organization impacted you as a Black person, and how does it compare to your early childhood formation as a Black individual?
5. How has the organization impacted your view of Black people currently?

#### **Phase III Questions**

1. Do you feel like opportunities for Black and White leaders are equitable within your organization?
2. Do (did) you feel as though you can be your full self?
3. How has your current friend group changed or remained the same as your childhood upbringing?

#### **Concluding Questions**

1. What do you think White leaders need to understand about being Black within their organization?
2. Do you see yourself in your current organization long-term?
  - a. *If applicable*.
3. Do you see yourself going back to a predominantly White organization? If not, why?
4. Who are leaders and authors that influence you?

## **Appendix E: The Stages of Redemptive Leadership**

### **The Five Stages of Redemptive Leadership**

Stage 1	Competency
State 2	Principles
Stage 3	Character
Stage 4	Transformational
Stage 5	Redemptive

## **Appendix F: White Leader Groups**

1. Group 1: Matthew Little
  - a. Behaviors: Cognitive Dissonance
  - b. Outcomes: Behaviors are triggered because they conflict with what has been taught based on the environment and what Little has learned over the last five years.
2. Group 2: Brendon Green, Charles Anderson, and Thadd McDonald
  - a. Behaviors: Cognitive Bias and Cognitive Dissonance
  - b. Outcomes: Behaviors are triggered because they are proximate to Black people but still closely attached to their own beliefs, organizational structures, and theology.
3. Group 3: Randy Armstrong and Michael Richards
  - a. Behaviors: Cognitive Bias, Confirmation Bias, and Cognitive Dissonance
  - b. Outcomes: Behaviors are triggered because of color-blind theology.
4. Group 4: Rashard Lewis, Charles Gladstone, and Kendra Powers
  - a. Behaviors: Bitterness, Mistrust, Depression, Anxiety, and Vacant Esteem
  - b. Outcomes: Behaviors are triggered because they feel minimized, not valued, and denigrated by the organization.
5. Group 5: Damion Thompson, Brittany Johnson, and Kendrick Long
  - a. Behaviors: Bitterness, Mistrust, Ever-Present Anger
  - b. Outcomes: Behaviors are triggered because their perspectives, passion for justice, and personal views on social issues conflict with their organizations.

## **APPENDIX G: INTERVIEWERS AND INTERVIEWEES**

### **Interviewers**

1. Sanchez Fair
2. Thomas Nicholas
3. Jonathan Sampson
4. Joseph Brown

### **White Leaders**

1. Matthew Little
2. Brendon Green
3. Charles Anderson
4. Thadd McDonald
5. Randy Armstrong
6. Michael Richards
7. Dan Stevenson

### **Black Leaders**

1. Rashard Lewis
2. Charles Gladstone
3. Kendra Powers
4. Damion Thompson
5. Brittany Johnson
6. Kendrick Long

## APPENDIX H: THREE FORMS OF SUPERSESSIONISM

### Punitive Supersessionism

Michael J. Vlach's "Punitive" or "retributive" supersessionism emphasizes Israel's disobedience and punishment by God as the reason for its displacement as the people of God.<sup>1</sup> Stated differently, Israel's mission and special role in the world were replaced by the Church because of their wickedness, which led to forfeiting their rights as God's chosen instrument. As Gabriel J. Fackre explains, this form of supersessionism "holds that the rejection of Christ both eliminates Israel from God's covenant love and provokes divine retribution."<sup>2</sup> With punitive supersessionism, according to Soulen, "God abrogates God's covenant with Israel on account of Israel's rejection of Christ and the gospel."<sup>3</sup> "Because the Jews reject Christ, "God in turn angrily rejects and punishes the Jews."<sup>4</sup> Jews rejecting Christ was a general perspective during the patristic era among scholars such as Hippolytus (c.205), Origen (c. 185-254), and Martin Luther, the father of the reformation.

Hippolytus advocated for punitive supersession when he declared, "And surely you, the Jews, have been darkened in the eyes of your soul with a darkness utter and everlasting. Furthermore, hear this yet more serious word: 'And their back do you bend always.' This means, so that they may be slaves to the nations, not four hundred and thirty years as in Egypt, nor seventy as in Babylon, but bend them to servitude, he says, 'always.'" Origen expounds upon this idea stating, "And we say with confidence that they, the Jews, will never be restored to their

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1. Hippolytus, 28-35.

2. Gabriel J. Fackre, *Ecumenical Faith in Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 141-148.

3. Thomas K. Soulen, *The God of Israel, and Christian Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1996), 25-30.

4. Soulen, *The God of Israel, and Christian Theology*, 30-45.

former condition. For they committed a crime of the most unhallowed kind.”<sup>5</sup> Lastly, Martin Luther held strong views concerning the Jews and his advocacy of Anti-Semitism. For him, the destruction of Jerusalem proved God’s permanent rejection of Israel: “Listen, Jew, are you aware that Jerusalem and your sovereignty, together with your temple and priesthood, have been destroyed for over 1,460 years? For such ruthless wrath of God is sufficient evidence that they assuredly have erred and gone astray. Therefore, the work of wrath is proof that the Jews, surely rejected by God, are no longer his people, and neither is he any longer their God.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Economic Supersessionism**

Economic supersessionism does not emphasize Israel’s disobedience and punishment. Instead, it focuses on God’s plan in history for the people of God to transfer from an ethnic group, Israel, to a universal group not based on ethnicity, the Church.<sup>7</sup> According to Soulen, economic supersessionism is the view that “carnal Israel’s history is providentially ordered from the outset to be taken up into the spiritual church.”<sup>8</sup> With this form of supersessionism, national Israel corresponds to Christ’s church in a merely prefigurative and carnal way.<sup>9</sup> Thus, Christ, with His advent, “brings about the obsolescence of carnal Israel and inaugurates the age of the spiritual church.”<sup>10</sup> In other words, Israel is not replaced because of disobedience and disloyalty, but they are replaced due to their role in the history of redemption, which expired with the

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5. Origen, *Against Celsus* 4.22, ANF 4:506.

6. Martin Luther, “*On the Jews and Their Lives*,” in LW 47:138-39. See also WA 53:418.

7. Kaiser, 31.

7. Soulen, *The God of Israel, and Christian Theology*, 181.

8. Kaiser, 22-31.

9. Soulen, *The God of Israel, and Christian Theology*, 22-29.

coming of Christ.<sup>11</sup> Economic supersessionism became popular on the heels of punitive supersessionism. Melito of Sardis declared: “The people, Israel, were precious before the church arose, and the law was marvelous before the gospel was elucidated. But when the church arose and the gospel took precedence the model was made void, conceding its power to reality. The people were made void when the church arose.”<sup>12</sup> Another highly influential scholar, Karl Barth, advocated for economic supersessionism and stated:

“The first Israel, constituted on the basis of physical descent from Abraham, has fulfilled its mission now that the Savior of the world has sprung from it and its Messiah has appeared. Its members can only accept this fact with gratitude and, in confirmation of their own deepest election and calling, attach themselves to the people of this Savior, their own King, whose members the Gentiles are now called to be as well. Its mission as a natural community has now run its course and cannot be continued or repeated.”<sup>13</sup>

Economic supersessionism continued its influence on other scholars like N.T. Wright who asserts that “Israel’s purpose had come to its head in Jesus’ work. As a result, ‘those who now belonged to Jesus’ people, claimed to be the continuation of Israel in a new situation.’”<sup>14</sup> The last influential version of supersessionism is Structural Supersessionism.

### **Structural Supersessionism**

Structural supersessionism focuses more on hermeneutics or perspectives concerning the Jewish Scriptures.<sup>15</sup> Soulen acknowledges the Christian biases that have been taught concerning the Jewish Scriptures of the Old Testament. However, Soulen connects structural supersessionism with how Christians have historically understood the biblical canon: “The

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10. Kaiser, 19- 31.

11. Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha*, trans. S.G. Hall (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), 18-21.

12. Barth, *CD III/2*, 584.

13. N.T. Wright, *The New Testament, and the People of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), 401-457.

14. Kaiser, 26-33.

problem of supersessionism in Christian theology goes beyond the explicit teaching that the church has displaced Israel as God's people in the economy of salvation. At a deeper level, the problem of supersessionism coincides with how Christians have traditionally understood the theological and narrative unity of the Christian canon as a whole."<sup>16</sup> Whereas punitive and economic supersessionism are "explicit doctrinal perspectives," according to Soulen, structural supersessionism concerns how the standard canonical narrative as a whole has been perceived.<sup>17</sup> He argues that the standard canonical narrative model, which the church has accepted since Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, turns on four key episodes: 1) God's intention to create the first parents, 2) the fall, 3) Christ's incarnation and the inauguration of the church, and 4) the final consummation.<sup>18</sup> The reality is that God's identity as the God of Israel and His history with the Jewish people "become largely indecisive for the Christian conception of God."<sup>19</sup> These are the various forms of supersessionism, and now we will examine the outcomes of what it has produced in the context of Christianity.

### **Outcomes of Supersessionism & God's Covenants**

Supersessionism has impacted and shaped evangelical theology, hermeneutics, discipleship, and organizations. It is imperative to remember that God never breaks or forsakes a covenant with His people. According to Jeremiah 31:31-34, the nation of Israel will never cease to exist because of the new covenant God made with Israel. Covenants are everlasting, and God

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15. Soulen, *The God of Israel, and Christian Theology*, 22- 33.

16. Soulen, *The God of Israel, and Christian Theology*, 181, n.6.

17. Soulen, *The God of Israel, and Christian Theology*, 31.

18. Soulen, *The God of Israel, and Christian Theology*, 20-33.

19. Soulen, *The God of Israel, and Christian Theology*, 20-33.



did not break his covenant with Israel, just like Jesus does not break His covenant and promise of eternal life with His people.<sup>20</sup> Eternal life forever reveals God's promises to His people, including God's covenant with Israel. Human behaviors, performances, and merits do not separate His people from His love, nor can it separate Them from eternal life. The outcome of supersessionism is evident, considering the treatment of Jews. Some of the languages even reflect the language used to describe and denigrate Black people in America historically and today. Historically, this reveals that Christians have struggled to see the value of humanity as created in God's image and what God demands from His people.

Supersessionism has produced arrogance which justified anti-Semitism and human hierarchy. There is cause for great concern because these characteristics lead to the Church determining duty and destiny for Christianity. Arrogance leads to the Church demonizing Jews and Israel while becoming branches without roots. Evangelicalism affirms the idea of being a New Testament and new covenant Christian movement, omitting teachings and or selectively choosing passages from the Old Testament to justify supersessionism, dehumanizing behaviors, and perspectives toward Jewish people. Do evangelical leaders consider the impact and dangers of allegorizing prophecies concerning Israel? Prophetic Scripture addressing Israel's future was not a mystical prediction about the Church. Aberration from sound biblical exegesis becomes a way to allegorize the Church by replacing it with Israel throughout all of Scripture.

One example of this would be the belief that Western Europeans, particularly Great Britain, are the direct lineal descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. There always needs to be a monarch sitting upon the throne of the Queen of England. Supersessionism is the misrepresentation and application of Scripture that eliminates Israel as God's chosen instrument. Thus, the justification of the brutality of Jewish people for centuries. It was supersessionism that gave power and motivation to Hitler to kill millions of Jews. The outcomes of supersessionism

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20. Soulen, *The God of Israel, and Christian Theology*, 20-33.

21. Soulen, *The God of Israel, and Christian Theology*, 20-33.

are evident considering the history of anti-Semitism and the justification of self-righteousness and arrogance that has impacted Christianity for centuries.<sup>21</sup>

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22. Soulen, *The God of Israel, and Christian Theology*, 20-33.

## APPENDIX I: Collective Memory

Collective Memory is the unconscious state of reliving the trauma through behaviors connected to various groups of people and cultures who share a cultural past and attempt to resolve issues that have been hidden.<sup>22</sup> Cultures and societies known for violence are often associated with a traumatic reenactment from previous generations— thus demonstrating both collective memory and experiences. Experiences that are unconsciously transmitted determine the narrative that impacts individuals' cultural and national identities and their group associations.<sup>23</sup> Collective memory is incredibly complex and nuanced in the discussion of intergenerational trauma because it addresses individuals' consciousness and unconscious state. Carl Jung proposes another way of considering the unconsciousness of trauma. Jung writes, “The collective unconscious is common to all; it is the foundation of what the ancients called the ‘sympathy of all things.’”<sup>24</sup> The collective unconscious holds the understanding that individual consciousness is not a blank slate and is influenced by forces outside of personal experience, including ancestors' experiences.<sup>25</sup> For further consideration, Jung writes: “The collective unconscious comprises in itself the psychic life of our ancestors right back to the earliest beginnings. It is the matrix of all conscious psychic occurrences, and hence it exerts an influence that compromises the freedom of consciousness to the highest degree since it is continually

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23. Sylvia Zofia Hartowicz and California Institute of Integral Studies.

24. A. Volkas, *Drama Therapy in the Repair of Collective Trauma*, In N. N. Sajani, & D. Johnson, (Eds.), *Trauma-informed Drama Therapy: Transforming Clinics, Classrooms, and Communities* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 2014), 41-68.

25. C. G. Jung, *The Practice of Psychotherapy*, (The collected works of C.G. Jung, Vol. 16), (Princeton, NJ: Bollingen Series XX, Princeton University Press, 1966a), 130-140. C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, (New York, NY: Vintage Books, Original work published in 1963, 1989).

striving to lead all conscious processes back into the old paths.”<sup>26</sup> Collective memory speaks to the transmission aspect of intergenerational trauma and how individuals unconsciously think, believe, and express themselves. Another aspect of collective memory is considering the role of family history within the individual’s experiences. History is a tool for understanding how individuals respond consciously and unconsciously within society.

## **APPENDIX J: SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY**

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26. Sylvia Zofia Hartowicz and California Institute of Integral Studies.

27. C. G. Jung, 229-230.

Bandura created a video in which an adult woman was shown being aggressive towards the Bobo doll by hitting it and shouting aggressive words.<sup>27</sup> Afterward, the video was shown to a group of children, and then the children were put into a room with the Bobo doll. The children began imitating the model by hitting the doll and calling it aggressive words: The children called the doll ugly while displaying aggression and violence towards the doll. The study was significant because it departed from behaviorism, the idea that all behavior is directed by reinforcement or rewards. The children received no encouragement or incentives to beat up the doll. Instead, they were imitating the behavior that they observed.

The key idea for social cognitive learning is that people learn from watching the behaviors of others and the consequences that directly impact individuals. Another way of stating this is by understanding the process of observational learning, which factors in the individuals' attention, retention, reproduction, and production.<sup>28</sup> The attention process is based on individuals observing what behaviors are being modeled and the frequency of the consistent modeling. The retention process is the ability to store and retain information modeled.<sup>29</sup> When information is stored in the psyche of an individual, they reproduce what they have witnessed and retained.<sup>30</sup> Then, information and behaviors are refined, leading to the motivational process— direct reinforcement, vicarious reinforcement, and self-administered reinforcement.<sup>31</sup> Considering the social learning theory and its impact on human cognition, SLT demonstrates how patterns and

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27. Psychology Today Staff, "Social Learning Theory," Psychology Today, accessed (June 22, 2021), <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/social-learning-theory>.

28. Saul McLeod, "Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory" (Simple Psychology, 2016, Accessed June 29, 2021), <https://www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html>.

29. McLeod.

30. McLeod.

31. McLeod.

behaviors modeled by parents, communities, and environments impact individual beliefs about various cultures. In addition, another key factor that plays a vital role is Historical Racial Trauma. Historical Racial Trauma is shared by a group rather than an individual and spans multiple generations who carry trauma-related symptoms without being present for the past traumatizing event.<sup>32</sup>

Through the transmittal process of intergenerational trauma, SLT creates an opportunity for leaders to understand better themselves and their beliefs about others who are different from them or have witnessed being subject to poor treatment. For example, consider adults over 60 today— how have they processed their early childhood of Jim Crow, segregation, and the Civil Rights Movement's tensions? What trauma and beliefs were transmitted to White and Black individuals post-slavery, and how do they differ? What was the historical racial trauma transmitted to Black descendants of slaves? Were there elements of internalized racism and racist ideas transmitted to White descendants? How did Jim Crow impact the lives of the Silent Generation and Boomers? How did Jim Crow impact Black and White families and the generations following? Social learning theory is a helpful tool, but it is not the only way of understanding the role of intergenerational trauma. Although it can explain some complex behaviors, it cannot adequately account for how we develop a whole range of behaviors, including thoughts and feelings.<sup>33</sup>

SLT creates a unique opportunity for leaders to consider social relationships within their organization. The preceding questions are worth exploring as predominantly White organizations

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32. Nathaniel V. Mobatt, Azure B. Thompson, Nghi D. Thai, and Jacob K. Tebes, *Historical Trauma as Public Narrative: A Conceptual Review of How History Impacts Present-Day Health* (Social Science & Medicine 106, April 2014), 128-136.

33. Mobatt, Thompson, Thai, and Tebes, *Historical Trauma as Public Narrative: A Conceptual Review of How History Impacts Present-Day Health*, 128-136.

pursue more diversity within their organization. If leaders consider the Bobo Doll experiment, how would individuals describe behaviors and patterns modeled by parents, communities, and environments? If a collective memory is shared within communities, how does that shape the individual and what they believe about other individuals? Black and White leaders share collective memory within their own cultures, and social learning theory speaks to stereotyping, and beliefs White have towards Blacks and Blacks have towards Whites. The Bobo Doll study illustrates how individuals are shaped and what they are taught to believe. SLT is helpful as we transition to the next section that addresses the behaviors Black and White leaders may exhibit. For Black leaders, I propose the theory of Transgenerational Trauma and signs of Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS) as a response to intergenerational trauma. For White leaders, I propose cognitive bias, confirmation bias, and cognitive dissonance as responses to intergenerational trauma.

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## **VITA**

Sanchez Fair was born in Greenville, SC, in 1989. He studied music performance at Southern Wesleyan University in Central, SC. Following his time at Southern Wesleyan University, Sanchez signed a record deal with The Advice and spent over a decade touring America playing music. In 2012, he moved to Charlotte and began attending Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He received his Master of Arts in Christian Ministries from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in 2019. Sanchez lives in Charlotte with his wife Chelsea and two boys, Micah, and Julian. He began his doctoral studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in September 2019 and anticipates receiving his Doctor of Ministry Degree in May 2022.